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The rivals

Richard Brinsley Sheridan

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2000

The Rivals

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“It is not the end of the world.”



“What can the girl mean?”

The Rivals

By

RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN

With an Introduction by

BRANDER MATTHEWS

and Illustrations by

M. POWER O'MALLEY



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Introduction

IN the days now departed, and perhaps for ever, when every town in this broad land had its theatre, with its own stock-company of actors and actresses, the manager was wont once and away to announce, with more or less flourish of trumpets, and as though he were doing a most meritorious thing, a series of old-comedy revivals. Whenever the announcement was put forth, the regular playgoer retired within himself, and made ready for an intellectual treat. If you asked the regular playgoer for a list of the Old Comedies, it was odds that he rattled off, glibly enough, first, the *School for Scandal*, second, *She Stoops to Conquer*, and third, the *Rivals*. After these he might hesitate, but if you pushed him to the wall, he would name a few more plays, of which *A New Way to Pay Old Debts* was the oldest and *Money* the youngest. Leaving the regular playgoer, and investigating for yourself, you will find that the Old Comedies are mostly those which, in spite of their being more than a hundred years old,

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are yet lively and sprightly enough to amuse a modern audience.

The life of a drama, even of a successful drama, is rarely three-score years and ten; and the number of dramas which live to be centenarians is small indeed. In the last century the case was different; and a hundred years ago the regular playgoer had a chance to see frequently eight or ten pieces by Massinger, Ben Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, and Shirley. Nowadays, Shakspeare's are the only Elizabethan plays which keep the stage, with one solitary exception,—Massinger's *A New Way to Pay Old Debts*. The *Chances*, of Beaumont and Fletcher; the *City Madam*, of Massinger; and *Every Man in his Humour*, of Ben Jonson,—these have all, one after another, dropped out of sight. The comedies of the eighteenth century have now in their turn become centenarians; of these there are half a score which have a precarious hold on the theatre, and are seen at lengthening intervals; and there are half a dozen which hold their own firmly. Of this scant half-dozen, the *School for Scandal* is, perhaps, in the greatest re-

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quest, followed closely by *She Stoops to Conquer* and the *Rivals*.

The *Rivals* was Sheridan's first play; it was produced at Covent Garden, January 17, 1775. Like the first plays of many another dramatist who has afterward succeeded abundantly, it failed dismally on its first performance, and again on the second, the night after. It was immediately withdrawn; in all probability, it was somewhat rewritten; and of a certainty it was very much shortened. Then, on January 28, after a ten days' absence from the bills, it reappeared, with Mr. Clinch in the place of Mr. Lee, as Sir Lucius O'Trigger.

Moore remarks that as comedy, more than any other species of composition, requires "that knowledge of human nature and the world which experience alone can give,—it seems not a little extraordinary that nearly all our first-rate comedies should have been the productions of very young men." Moore then cites Farquhar, and Vanbrugh, and especially Congreve, all of whose comedies were written before he was twenty-five. It is these three writers who gave the stamp to

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English comedy ; and Sheridan's die was not unlike theirs. Now, a consideration of the fact that English comedy is thus, in a measure, the work of young men, may tend to explain at once its failings and its force. As Lessing says: "Who has nothing can give nothing. A young man, just entering upon the world himself, cannot possibly know and depict the world." And that is just the weak point of English comedy ; it is brilliant and full of dash, and it carries itself bravely, but it does not show an exact knowledge of the world, and it does not depict with precision. "The greatest comic genius," Lessing adds, "shows itself empty and hollow in its youthful works." Empty and hollow are harsh words to apply to English comedy ; but it is easy to detect, behind all its glitter and sparkle, a want of depth, a superficiality, which is not far from the emptiness and hollowness of which Lessing speaks. Compare this English comedy of Congreve and of Sheridan, which is a battle of the wits, with the broader and more human comedy of Molière and of Shakspeare, and it is easy to see what Lessing means. In place of a liberal humanity is an exuberance

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of youthful fancy and wit, delighting in its exercise. What gives value to these early plays, and especially to Sheridan's, is the touch of the true dramatist to be seen in them; and the dramatist is like the poet in so far that he is born, not made.

"A dramatic author," says the younger Alexandre Dumas, "as he advances in life, can acquire higher thoughts, can develop a higher philosophy, can conceive and execute works of stronger tissue, than when he began; in a word, the matter he can cast into his mould will be nobler and richer, but the mould will be the same." Dumas proceeded to show how the first plays of Corneille, of Molière, and of Racine, from a technical point of view, are as well constructed as the latest. So it is with Congreve, and Vanbrugh, and Farquhar, and Sheridan; they gave up the stage before they had great experience of the world; but they were born dramatists. All their comedies were made in the head, not in the heart. But made where or how you please, they are well made. It is impossible to deny that the *Rivals*, however hollow or empty it may appear on minute critical inspection, is a very extraordinary

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production for a young man of twenty-three. ✓

Humour ripens slowly, but in the case of Sheridan some forcing-house of circumstance seems to have brought it to an early maturity, not so rich, perhaps, or so mellow as it might have become with time, and yet full of a flavour of its own. Strangely enough, the early *Rivals* is more humorous and less witty than the later *School for Scandal*,—perhaps because the humour of the *Rivals* is rather the frank feeling for fun and appreciation of the incongruous (both of which may be youthful qualities) than the deeper and broader humour which we see at its full in Molière and Shakspeare.

So we have the bold outlines of Mrs. Malaprop and Bob Acres, personages having only a slight likeness to nature, and not always even consistent to their own projection, but strong in comic effect and abundantly laughter-compelling. They are caricatures, if you will, but caricatures of great force, full of robust fun, tough in texture, and able to stand by themselves, in spite of any artistic inequality. Squire Acres is a country gentleman of limited intelligence, incapable of acquiring, even by contagion, the curious sys-

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tem of referential swearing by which he gives variety to his speech. But "odds, bullets, and blades!" as he says, his indeterminate valour is so aptly utilized, and his ultimate poltroonery in the duel scene is so whimsically developed, and so sharply contrasted with the Irish assurance and ease of Sir Lucius O'Trigger, that he would be a hard-hearted critic indeed who could taunt Mr. Acres with his artistic shortcomings. And it surely takes a very acute mind to blunder so happily in the "derangement of epitaphs" as does Mrs. Malaprop; she must do it with malice prepense, and as though she, and not her niece, were as "headstrong as an allegory on the banks of the Nile." It is only a sober second thought, however, which allows us to "cast aspersions on her parts of speech." While Bob Acres and Mrs. Malaprop are before us we accept them as they are; and here we touch what was at once Sheridan's weakness and his strength, which lay side by side. He sought, first of all, theatrical effect; ✓ dramatic excellence was a secondary and subservient consideration. On the stage, where all goes with a snap, consistency of character is not as

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important as distinctness of drawing. The attributes of a character may be incongruous if they make the character itself more readily recognizable; and the attention of the spectator may be taken from the incongruity by humour of situation and quickness of dialogue. Acres's odd oaths are no great strain on consistency, and they help to fix him in our memory. Mrs. Malaprop's ingenuity in dislocating the dictionary is very amusing, and Sheridan did not hesitate to invent extravagant blunders for her, any more than he hesitated to lend his own wit to Fag and David, the servants, who were surely as incapable of appreciating it as they were of inventing it. After all, Sheridan had to live on his wit; and he wrote his 'plays to make money by its display. And the more of himself he put into each of his characters, the more brilliant the play. To say this is, of course, to say that Sheridan belongs in the second rank of comedy writers, with Congreve and Regnard, and not in the class with Shakspeare and Molière. But humour and an insight into human nature are not found united with the play-making faculty once in a century; there is

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only one Shakspeare, and only one Molière. It is well that a quick wit and a lively fancy can amuse us not unsatisfactorily, and that, in default of Shakspeare and Molière, we have at least Beaumarchais and Sheridan.

It is well that Sheridan wrote the *Rivals* just when he did, or else both wit and humour might have been banished from the English stage for years. That there was ever any danger of English comedy stiffening itself into prudish priggishness it is not easy now to credit; but in the eighteenth century the danger was real. A school of critics had arisen who prescribed that comedy should be genteel, and that it should eschew all treatment of ordinary human nature, confining itself chiefly to sentiment in high life. A school of dramatists, beginning with Steele (whom it is sad to see in such company), and including Cumberland and Hugh Kelly, taught by example what these critics set forth by precept. The bulk of playgoers were never converted to these principles, but they obtained in literary society and were, for the moment, fashionable. There were not lacking those who protested. Fielding, who

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had studied out something of the secret of Molière's humour in the adaptations he made from the author of the *Miser*, had no sympathy with the new school; and when he came to write his great novel, *Tom Jones*, he had a sly thrust or two at the fashion. He introduces to us, for example, a puppet-show which was performed "with great regularity and decency. It was called the fine and serious part of the *Provoked Husband*, and it was indeed a very grave and solemn entertainment, without any low wit, or humour, or jests; or, to do it no more than justice, anything which could provoke a laugh. The audience were all highly pleased."

Tom Jones was published in 1749; and in 1773 Sentimental-Comedy still survived, and was ready to sneer at Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer*, and to call its hearty and almost boisterous humour "low." But Tony Lumpkin's country laugh cleared the atmosphere. Sentimental-Comedy had received a deadly blow. Some months before *She Stoops to Conquer* was brought out, Foote had helped to make the way straight for a revival of true comedy, whereat a man might ven-

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ture to laugh, by announcing a play for his "Primitive Puppet-show," called the *Handsome Housemaid, or Piety in Pattens*, which was to illustrate how a maiden of low degree, by the mere effects of her morality and virtue, raised herself to honour and riches. In his life of Garrick, Tom Davies tells us that *Piety in Pattens* killed Sentimental-Comedy, although until then Hugh Kelly's *False Delicacy* had been the favourite play of the times. It is, perhaps, true that Foote scotched the snake; it is certain, however, that it was Sheridan who killed it. Two years after Goldsmith and Foote came Sheridan; and after the *Rivals* there was little chance for Sentimental-Comedy. Moore prints passages from an early sketch of a farce, from which we can see that Sheridan never took kindly to the sentimental school. Yet so anxious was he for the success of the *Rivals*, and so important was this success to him, that he attempted to conciliate the wits and fine ladies who were bitten by the current craze; at least it is difficult to see any other reason for the characters of Julia and Faulkland, so different from all Sheridan's other work, and so wholly

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wanting in the sparkle in which he excelled. And the calculation was seemingly not unwise; the scenes between Julia and Faulkland, to which we now listen with dumb impatience, and which Mr. Jefferson, in his version of the piece, has trimmed away, were received with delight. John Bernard, who was at one time secretary of the Beefsteak Club, and afterward one of the first of American managers, records in his amusing *Retrospections* that the audience at the first performance of the *Rivals* contained "two parties,—those supporting the prevailing taste, and those who were indifferent to it, and liked nature. On the first night of a new play it was very natural that the former should predominate, and what was the consequence? Why, that Faulkland and Julia (which Sheridan had obviously introduced to conciliate the sentimentalists, but which, in the present day, are considered incumbrances) were the characters most favourably received, whilst Sir Anthony Absolute, Bob Acres, and Lydia, those faithful and diversified pictures of life, were barely tolerated."

But the sentimentalists were afterward present

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in diminishing force; and the real success of the comedy came from those who could appreciate its fun and who were not too genteel to laugh. So Sheridan, writing a new prologue to be spoken on the tenth night, drew attention to the figure of Comedy (which stood on one side of the stage, as Tragedy did on the other), and bade the audience

*“Look on her well—does she seem form’d to teach?
Should you expect to hear this lady—preach?
Is gray experience suited to her youth?
Do solemn sentiments become that mouth?
Yet, thus adorned with every graceful art
To charm the fancy and to reach the heart,
Must we displace her? and instead advance
The goddess of the woful countenance? —
The Sentimental Muse! — Her emblems view —
The ‘Pilgrim’s Progress’ and a sprig of rue!
There fixed in usurpation should she stand,
She’ll snatch the dagger from her sister’s hand;
And having made her votaries weep a flood,
Good heaven! she’ll end her comedies in blood!”*

Sheridan’s use of the figures of Comedy and Tragedy is characteristic of his aptness in turning to his own advantage any accident upon which his quick wit could seize. Characteristic, too, is the willingness to borrow a hint from another. Sheridan was not above taking his matter

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wherever he found it. Indeed, there are not wanting those who say that Sheridan had nothing of his own, and was barely able to cover his mental nakedness with rags stolen everywhere. John Forster declared that Lydia Languish and her lover owed something to Steele's *Tender Husband*. Dibdin, in his *History of the Stage*, says that Lydia was stolen from Colman's Polly Honeycombe. Whipple found that Sir Anthony Absolute was suggested by Smollett's Matthew Bramble; and, improving on this, Thomas Arnold, in the article on English Literature in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, spoke of the *Rivals* as dug out of *Humphrey Clinker*. Watkins, Sheridan's first biographer, had already pretended to trace Mrs. Malaprop to a waiting-woman in Fielding's *Joseph Andrews*; other critics had called her a reproduction of Mrs. Heidelberg, in Colman and Garrick's *Clandestine Marriage*. And a more recent writer spoke of Theodore Hook's *Ramscotbottom Papers* as containing the original of all the Mrs. Malaprops and Mrs. Partingtons. Not only were the characters thus all copied here and there, but the incidents also are stolen. Moore

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and Mrs. Inchbald point out that Faulkland's trial of Julia's affection by a pretended danger and need of instant flight, is anticipated both in Prior's *Nut-brown Maid*, and in Smollett's *Peregrine Pickle*; and Boaden, in his biography of Kemble, finds the same situation in the *Memoirs of Miss Sidney Biddulph*, a novel by Sheridan's mother, which was once very popular, but which Sheridan told Rogers he had never read. Not content with thus robbing Sheridan of the constituent parts of his play, an attempt has been made to deprive him of the play itself. Under the head of Literary Gossip, a British weekly called *The Athenæum*, on January 1, 1876, had this paragraph:

"A very curious and most interesting fact has come to light at the British Museum. Among the collection of old plays (presented to that institution by Mr. Coventry Patmore in 1864) which formerly belonged to Richard Brinsley Sheridan, has been found the holograph original of the comedy *The Trip to Bath*, written in 1749, by Mrs. Frances Sheridan, his mother, and which, it is said in Moore's *Life of Sheridan*, was the source of his play of the *Rivals*. A very slight comparison of the two plays leaves no doubt whatever of the fact; and in the character of Mrs. Malaprop, Sheridan has actually borrowed

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some of her amusing blunders from the original Mrs. Tryfort without any alteration whatever."

I have massed these accusations together to meet them with a general denial. I have compared Sheridan's characters and incidents with the so-called originals; and I confess that I can see very little likeness in any case, and no ground at all for a charge of plagiarism. It is not that Sheridan was at all above borrowing from his neighbour: it is that in the *Rivals* he did not so borrow, or that his borrowings are trifling and trivial both in quantity and quality. Polly Honeycombe, for example, is like Lydia Languish in her taste for novel-reading, in her romantic notions, and in nothing else; Polly figures in farce and Lydia in high comedy; Polly is a shopkeeper's daughter, and Lydia has the fine airs of good society. It is as hard to see a likeness between Polly and Lydia as it is to see just what Sheridan owes to Steele's *Tender Husband*. The accusation that the *Rivals* is indebted to *Humphrey Clinker* is absurd; Sir Anthony Absolute is not at all like Mr. Matthew Bramble; indeed, in all of Smollett's novel, of which the

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humour is so rich, not to say oily, there is nothing which recalls Sheridan's play, save possibly Mistress Tabitha Bramble, who is an old woman, anxious to marry and mistaking a proposal for her niece to be one for her own hand, and who blunders in her phrases. How far, however, from Sheridan's neat touch is Smollett's coarse stroke! "Mr. Gwynn," says Mistress Tabitha to Quin the actor, "I was once vastly entertained with your playing the *Ghost of Gimlet* at Drury Lane, when you rose up through the stage with a white face and red eyes, and spoke of *quails upon the frightful porcupine*." Mrs. Slipslop, in *Joseph Andrews*, has also a misapplication of words, but never so aptly incongruous and so exactly inaccurate as Mrs. Malaprop. This trick of speech is all either Mistress Bramble or Mrs. Slipslop have in common with Mrs. Malaprop; and Mrs. Heidelberg has not even this. The charge that Mrs. Malaprop owes aught to Theodore Hook is highly comic and preposterous, as Hook was born in 1788, and published the *Ramsbottom Papers* between 1824 and 1828,—say half a cen-

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tury after Mrs. Malaprop had proved her claim to immortality. And it is scarcely less comic and preposterous to imagine that Sheridan could have derived the scene between Julia and Faulkland from Prior's *Nut-brown Maid*, and from Smollett's *Peregrine Pickle*, and from Mrs. Sheridan's *Sidney Biddulph*; the situation in the play differs materially from those in the three other productions. Remains only the sweeping charge of *The Athenæum*; and this well-nigh as causeless as the rest. The manuscript of which *The Athenæum* speaks is No. 25,975, and it is called *A Journey to Bath*; it ends with the third act, and two more are evidently wanting. It is only "a very slight comparison" of this comedy of Mrs. Sheridan's with her son's *Rivals*, which "leaves no doubt whatever" of the taking of the latter from the former. I have read the *Journey to Bath* very carefully; it is a rather lively comedy, such as were not uncommon in 1750; and it is wholly unlike the *Rivals*. The characters of the *Journey to Bath* are: Lord Hewkly; Sir Jeremy Bull, Bart.; Sir Jonathan Bull, his brother, a city knight; Edward, son to Sir Jonathan; Champi-

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gnon; Stapleton; Lady Filmot; Lady Bel Air-castle; Mrs. Tryfort, a citizen's widow; Lucy, her daughter; Mrs. Surface, one who keeps a lodging-house at Bath. Mrs. Surface, it may be noted, is a scandalmonger, who hates scandal; and Sheridan used both the name and the character in his later and more brilliant comedy. In the *Journey to Bath* and the *Rivals*, the scenes are laid at Bath; and here the likeness ends,—except that Mrs. Tryfort seems to be a sort of first draft of Mrs. Malaprop. It is difficult to doubt that Sheridan had read his mother's comedy and had claimed as his by inheritance this Mrs. Tryfort, who is described by one of the other characters as the “vainest poor creature, and the fondest of hard words, which, without miscalling, she always takes care to misapply.” Few of her misapplications, however, are as happy as those of Mrs. Malaprop.

After all, the invention is rather Shakspeare's than Mrs. Sheridan's. Mrs. Malaprop is but Dogberry in petticoats. And the fault of which Whipple accused Sheridan may be laid at Shakspeare's door also. Whipple called Mrs. Mala-

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prop's mistakes "too felicitously infelicitous to be natural," and declares them "characteristic, not of a mind flippantly stupid, but curiously acute," and that we laugh at her as we should at an acquaintance "who was exercising his ingenuity, instead of exposing his ignorance." This is all very true, but true it is also that Dogberry asked, "Who think you to be the most desertless man to be constable?" And again, "Is our whole dissembly appeared?" And "O villain! thou wilt be condemned into everlasting redemption for this!" Sheridan has blundered in good company, at all events.

Not content with finding suggestions for Sheridan's work in various fictions, his earliest biographer, Dr. Watkins, suggests that the plot of the *Rivals* was taken from life, having been suggested by his own courtship of Miss Linley and the ensuing duel with Captain Mathews. And a later biographer, Mrs. Oliphant, chose to identify Miss Lydia Languish with Mrs. Sheridan. Both suggestions are absurd. There is no warrant whatever for the assumption that any similarity existed between Miss Linley and Miss

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Languish; and the incidents of Sheridan's comedy do not at all coincide with the incidents of Sheridan's biography. Already, in his *Maid of Bath*, had Foote set Miss Linley and one of her suitors on the stage; and surely Sheridan, who would not let his wife sing in public, would shrink from putting the story of their courtship into a comedy. It has been suggested, though, that in the duel scene Sheridan profited by his own experience on the field of honour; and also, that in the character of Faulkland he sketched his own state of mind during the long hours of waiting, when he was desperately in love, and saw little hope of marital happiness; in the days when he had utilized the devices of the stage, and for the sake of getting near to her for a few minutes, he had disguised himself as the coachman who drove her at night to her father's house. This may be true; but it is as dangerous as it is easy to apply the speeches of a dramatist, speaking in many a feigned voice, to the circumstances of his own life.

The *Rivals*, as a play, has suffered the usual vicissitudes of all old favourites. Although never

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long forgotten, it has been now and again neglected and now and again harshly treated. Of late years the parts of Faulkland and Julia have been much curtailed when the comedy has been acted in England; and in the admirable revival effected in 1880 by Mr. Joseph Jefferson in the United States, Julia was wholly omitted and Faulkland was suffered to remain only that he might serve as a foil to Bob Acres. It is pleasant to note that when the play was produced at the Haymarket Theatre in London by Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft, the parts of Julia and Faulkland were restored to their pristine importance. In the Haymarket revival of 1884, as in a highly successful revival at the Vaudeville Theatre (where in 1882-3 the comedy was acted more than two hundred times), the part of Mrs. Malaprop was performed by Mrs. Sterling, whose reading of the part, although more conscious and affected than Mrs. Drew's, was as effective as any author could desire. In the United States we were fortunate in the possession of Mr. John Gilbert, whose Sir Anthony Absolute may be matched with the great Sir Anthonys of the past. We may

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be sure that Mr. Gilbert's fine artistic conscience would forbid his repetition of a freak of Downton's, who once, for a benefit, gave up Sir Anthony to appear as Mrs. Malaprop.

Nor was this the only occasion when a man played a woman's part in this comedy. In his autobiography, Kotzebue (from whom the author of the *Rivals* was afterward to borrow *Pizarro*) records the performance of the English comedy in German in the cloister of the Minorite's Convent, a performance in which the future German dramatist, then a mere youth, doubled the parts of Julia and Acres! In German as in French, there is more than one translation or adaptation of the *Rivals*; and some of them are not without a comicality of their own. It is to be remembered, also, that on the celebrated visit of the English actors to Paris, in 1827,—a visit which had great influence on the development of French dramatic literature, and which may, indeed, be called the exciting cause of the Romantic movement,—the first play presented to the Parisian public by the English actors was the *Rivals*.

Author's Preface

A *PREFACE* to a play seems generally to be considered as a kind of closet-prologue, in which—if his piece has been successful—the author solicits that indulgence from the reader which he had before experienced from the audience; but as the scope and immediate object of a play is to please a mixed assembly in representation (whose judgment in the theatre at least is decisive), its degree of reputation is usually as determined as public, before it can be prepared for the cooler tribunal of the study. Thus any further solicitude on the part of the writer becomes unnecessary at least, if not an intrusion; and if the piece has been condemned in the performance, I fear an address to the closet, like an appeal to posterity, is constantly regarded as the procrastination of a suit, from a consciousness of the weakness of the cause. From these considerations, the following comedy would certainly have been submitted to the reader, without any further introduction than what it had in the representation, but that its success has probably been founded on a circumstance which the author is informed has not

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before attended a theatrical trial, and which consequently ought not to pass unnoticed.

I need scarcely add, that the circumstance alluded to was the withdrawing of the piece, to remove those imperfections in the first representation which were too obvious to escape reprehension, and too numerous to admit of a hasty correction. There are few writers, I believe, who, even in the fullest consciousness of error, do not wish to palliate the faults which they acknowledge: and, however trifling the performance, to second their confession of its deficiencies, by whatever plea seems least disgraceful to their ability. In the present instance, it cannot be said to amount either to candour or modesty in me, to acknowledge an extreme inexperience and want of judgment on matters, in which, without guidance from practice, or spur from success, a young man should scarcely boast of being an adept. If it be said, that under such disadvantages no one should attempt to write a play, I must beg leave to dissent from the position, while the first point of experience that I have gained on the subject is, a knowledge of the candour and judgment with which an impartial public distinguishes between the errors of

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inexperience and incapacity, and the indulgence which it shows even to a disposition to remedy the defects of either.

It were unnecessary to enter into any further extenuation of what was thought exceptionable in this play, but that it has been said, that the managers should have prevented some of the defects before its appearance to the public—and in particular the uncommon length of the piece as represented the first night. It were an ill return for the most liberal and gentlemanly conduct on their side, to suffer any censure to rest where none was deserved. Hurry in writing has long been exploded as an excuse for an author; however, in the dramatic line, it may happen, that both an author and a manager may wish to fill a chasm in the entertainment of the public with a hastiness not altogether culpable. The season was advanced when I first put the play into Mr. Harris's hands; it was at that time at least double the length of any acting comedy. I profited by his judgment and experience in the curtailings of it—till, I believe, his feeling for the vanity of a young author got the better of his desire for correctness, and he left many excrescences remaining, because he had assisted in

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pruning so many more. Hence, though I was not uninformed that the acts were still too long, I flattered myself that, after the first trial, I might with safer judgment proceed to remove what should appear to have been most dissatisfactory. Many other errors there were, which might in part have arisen from my being by no means conversant with plays in general, either in reading or at the theatre. Yet I own that, in one respect, I did not regret my ignorance; for as my first wish in attempting a play was to avoid every appearance of plagiarism, I thought I should stand a better chance of effecting this from being in a walk which I had not frequented, and where, consequently, the progress of invention was less likely to be interrupted by starts of recollection: for on subjects on which the mind has been much informed, invention is slow of exerting itself. Faded ideas float in the fancy like half-forgotten dreams; and the imagination in its fullest enjoyments becomes suspicious of its offspring, and doubts whether it has created or adopted.

With regard to some particular passages which on the first night's representation seemed generally disliked, I confess, that if I felt any emotion of sur-

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prise at the disapprobation, it was not that they were disapproved of, but that I had not before perceived that they deserved it. As some part of the attack on the piece was begun too early to pass for the sentence of judgment, which is ever tardy in condemning, it has been suggested to me, that much of the disapprobation must have arisen from virulence of malice, rather than severity of criticism; but as I was more apprehensive of there being just grounds to excite the latter than conscious of having deserved the former, I continue not to believe that probable, which I am sure must have been unprovoked. However, if it was so, and I could even mark the quarter from whence it came, it would be ungenerous to retort; for no passion suffers more than malice from disappointment. For my own part, I see no reason why the author of a play should not regard a first night's audience as a candid and judicious friend attending, in behalf of the public, at his last rehearsal. If he can dispense with flattery, he is sure at least of sincerity, and even though the annotation be rude, he may rely upon the justness of the comment. Considered in this light, that audience, whose fiat is essential to the poet's claim, whether his object be fame

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or profit, has surely a right to expect some deference to its opinion, from principles of politeness at least, if not from gratitude.

As for the little puny critics, who scatter their peevish strictures in private circles, and scribble at every author who has the eminence of being unconnected with them, as they are usually spleen-swoln from a vain idea of increasing their consequence, there will always be found a petulance and illiberality in their remarks which should place them as far beneath the notice of a gentleman, as their original dulness had sunk them from the level of the most unsuccessful author.

It is not without pleasure that I catch at an opportunity of justifying myself from the charge of intending any national reflection in the character of Sir Lucius O'Trigger. If any gentlemen opposed the piece from that idea, I thank them sincerely for their opposition; and if the condemnation of this comedy (however misconceived the provocation), could have added one spark to the decaying flame of national attachment to the country supposed to be reflected on, I should have been happy in its fate; and might with truth have boasted, that it had done more real

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service in its failure than the successful morality of a thousand stage-novels will ever effect.

It is usual, I believe, to thank the performers in a new play, for the exertion of their several abilities. But where (as in this instance) their merit has been so striking and uncontroverted, as to call for the warmest and truest applause from a number of judicious audiences, the poet's after-praise comes like the feeble acclamation of a child to close the shouts of a multitude. The conduct, however, of the principals in a theatre cannot be so apparent to the public. I think it, therefore, but justice to declare that from this theatre (the only one I can speak of from experience) those writers who wish to try the dramatic line will meet with that candour and liberal attention which are generally allowed to be better calculated to lead genius into excellence, than either the precepts of judgment, or the guidance of experience.

THE AUTHOR

The Rivals

Dramatis Personae

As originally acted at Covent-Garden Theatre in 1775

Sir Anthony Absolute

Captain Absolute

Faulkland

Acres

Sir Lucius O' Trigger

Fag

David

Thomas

Mrs. Malaprop

Lydia Languish

Julia

Lucy

Mr. Shuter

Mr. Woodward

Mr. Lewis

Mr. Quick

Mr. Lee¹

Mr. Lee Lewes

Mr. Dunstal

Mr. Fearon

Mrs. Green

Miss Barsanti

Mrs. Bulkley

Mrs. Lessingham

Maid, Boy, Servants, etc.

SCENE : *BATH*

Time of Action: Five Hours

¹ Afterwards by Mr. Clinch.

Prologue

BY THE AUTHOR

Spoken by Mr. WOODWARD and Mr. QUICK

*Enter SERJEANT-AT-LAW, and ATTORNEY following and
giving a paper*



SERJ. WHAT's here!—a vile cramp
hand! I cannot see
Without my spectacles.

Att. He means his fee.
Nay, Mr. Serjeant, good sir, try again.

[Gives money]

Serj. The scrawl improves! *[more]* O come, 't is
pretty plain.

Hey! how's this? Dibble!—sure it cannot be!
A poet's brief! a poet and a fee!

Att. Yes, sir! though *you* without reward, I know,
Would gladly plead the Muse's cause.

Serj. So!—so!

Att. And if the fee offends, your wrath should fall
On me.

Serj. Dear Dibble, no offence at all.

Att. Some sons of Phoebus in the courts we meet,

Serj. And fifty sons of Phoebus in the Fleet!

Att. Nor pleads he worse, who with a decent sprig
Of bays adorns his legal waste of wig.

Serj. Full-bottom'd heroes thus, on signs, unfurl
A leaf of laurel in a grove of curl!

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The Rivals

Yet tell your client that, in adverse days,
This wig is warmer than a bush of bays.

Att. Do you, then, sir, my client's place supply,
Profuse of robe and prodigal of tie—
Do you, with all those blushing powers of face,
And wonted bashful hesitating grace,
Rise in the court, and flourish on the case. [Exit

Serj. For practice then suppose—this brief will show
it,—

Me, Serjeant Woodward,—counsel for the poet.
Used to the ground, I know, 't is hard to deal
With this dread *court*, from whence there's *no appeal*;
No *tricking* here, to blunt the edge of *law*,
Or, damned in *equity*, escape by *flaw*:
But *judgment* given, *your sentence* must remain;
No *writ of error* lies—to *Drury-lane*!

Yet when so kind you seem, 't is past dispute
We gain some favour, if not *costs of suit*.
No spleen is here! I see no hoarded fury;—

—I think I never faced a milder jury!
Sad else our plight! where frowns are transportation,
A hiss the gallows, and a groan damnation!
But such the public candour, without fear
My client waives all *right of challenge* here.
No newsman from *our session* is dismiss'd,
Nor wit nor critic *we* scratch off the list;
His faults can never hurt another's ease,
His crime, at worst, a *bad attempt* to please:
Thus, all respecting, he appeals to all,
And by the general voice will *stand or fall*.

Prologue

BY THE AUTHOR

Spoken on the tenth night, by Mrs. BULKLEY



RANTED our cause, our suit and trial
o'er,

The worthy Serjeant need appear no
more :

In pleasing I a different client choose,

He served the Poet—I would serve the Muse :

Like him, I'll try to merit your applause,

A female counsel in a female's cause.

Look on this form,*—where Humour, quaint and
sly,

Dimples the cheek, and points the beaming eye ;

Where gay Invention seems to boast its wiles

In amorous hint, and half-triumphant smiles ;

While her light mask or covers Satire's strokes,

Or hides the conscious blush her wit provokes.

—Look on her well—does she seem form'd to teach ?

Should you *expect* to hear this lady preach ?

Is gray experience suited to her youth ?

Do solemn sentiments become that mouth ?

Bid her be grave, those lips should rebel prove

To every theme that slanders mirth or love.

Yet, thus adorn'd with every graceful art

To charm the fancy and yet reach the heart—

Must we displace her ? And instead advance

* Pointing to the figure of Comedy.

The Rivals

The Goddess of the woful countenance—
The sentimental Muse!— Her emblems view,
The Pilgrim's Progress, and a sprig of rue!
View her—too chaste to look like flesh and blood—
Primely portrayed on emblematic wood!
There, fix'd in usurpation, should she stand,
She'll snatch the dagger from her sister's hand:
And having made her votaries *weep a flood*,
Good heaven! she'll end her comedies in blood—
Bid Harry Woodward break poor Dunstal's crown;
Imprison Quick, and knock Ned Shuter down;
While sad Barsanti, weeping o'er the scene,
Shall stab herself—or poison Mrs. Green.—

Such dire encroachments to prevent in time,
Demands the critic's voice—the poet's rhyme.
Can our light scenes add strength to holy laws?
Such puny patronage but hurts the cause:
Fair Virtue scorns our feeble aid to ask;
And moral Truth disdains the trickster's mask.
For here their fav'rite stands,¹ whose brow, severe
And sad, claims Youth's respect, and Pity's tear;
Who, when oppress'd by foes her worth creates,
Can point a poniard at the Guilt she hates.

¹ Pointing to Tragedy.

The Rivals: Act I

SCENE I: *A Street in Bath*

Enter THOMAS; he crosses the stage; FAG follows, looking after him



AG. WHAT! Thomas!—Sure 't is he!—
What! Thomas! Thomas!

Thos. Hey!—Odds life! Mr. Fag!—
give us your hand, my old fellow-servant.

Fag. Excuse my glove, Thomas:—I'm
devilish glad to see you, my lad. Why, my prince of
charioteers, you look as hearty!—but who the deuce
thought of seeing you in Bath?

Thos. Sure, master, Madam Julia, Harry, Mrs. Kate,
and the postilion, be all come.

Fag. Indeed!

Thos. Ay, master thought another fit of the gout was
coming to make him a visit;—so he'd a mind to gi't
the slip, and whip! we were all off at an hour's warn-
ing.

Fag. Ay, ay, hasty in everything, or it would not be
Sir Anthony Absolute!

Thos. But tell us, Mr. Fag, how does young master?
Odd! Sir Anthony will stare to see the captain here!

Fag. I do not serve Captain Absolute now.

The Rivals

Thos. Why sure!

Fag. At present I am employed by Ensign Beverley.

Thos. I doubt, Mr. Fag, you ha'n't changed for the better.

Fag. I have not changed, Thomas.

Thos. No! Why, did n't you say you had left young master?

Fag. No.—Well, honest Thomas, I must puzzle you no farther:—briefly then—Captain Absolute and Ensign Beverley are one and the same person.

Thos. The devil they are!

Fag. So it is indeed, Thomas; and the *ensign* half of my master being on guard at present—the *captain* has nothing to do with me.

Thos. So, so!—What, this is some freak, I warrant!—Do tell us, Mr. Fag, the meaning o't—you know I ha' trusted you.

Fag. You'll be secret, Thomas?

Thos. As a coach-horse.

Fag. Why then the cause of all this is—LOVE.—Love, Thomas, who (as you may get read to you) has been a masquerader ever since the days of Jupiter.

Thos. Ay, ay;—I guessed there was a lady in the case:—but pray, why does your master pass only for *ensign*? Now if he had shad *general* indeed—

Fag. Ah! Thomas, there lies the mystery o' the matter. Hark'ee, Thomas, my master is in love with a lady of a very singular taste; a lady who likes him better as a *half-pay* *ensign* than if she knew he were son and heir

Act First

to Sir Anthony Absolute, a baronet of three thousand a year.

Thos. That is an odd taste indeed!—But has she got the stuff, Mr. Fag? Is she rich, hey?

Fag. Rich! Why, I believe she owns half the stocks! Zounds! Thomas, she could pay the national debt as easily as I could my washerwoman! She has a lapdog that eats out of gold,—she feeds her parrot with small pearls,—and all her thread-papers are made of bank-notes!

Thos. Bravo, faith!—Odd! I warrant she has a set of thousands at least: but does she draw kindly with the captain?

Fag. As fond as pigeons.

Thos. May one hear her name?

Fag. Miss Lydia Languish.—But there is an old tough aunt in the way;—though, by the by, she has never seen my master—for we got acquainted with miss while on a visit in Gloucestershire.

Thos. Well—I wish they were once harnessed together in matrimony.—But pray, Mr. Fag, what kind of a place is this Bath?—I ha' heard a deal of it—here's a mort o' merry-making, hey?

Fag. Pretty well, Thomas, pretty well—'tis a good lounge; in the morning we go to the pump-room (though neither my master nor I drink the waters); after breakfast we saunter on the parades, or play a game at billiards; at night we dance; but damn the place, I'm tired of it; their regular hours stupefy me—not a fiddle nor a card after eleven!—However, Mr. Faulkland's gentleman and I keep it up a little in private parties—

The Rivals

I'll introduce you there, Thomas — you'll like him much.

Thos. Sure I know Mr. Du-Peigne — you know his master is to marry Madam Julia.

Fag. I had forgot. — But, Thomas, you must polish a little — indeed you must. — Here now — this wig! — What the devil do you do with a wig, Thomas? — None of the London whips of any degree of *ton* wear wigs now.

Thos. More's the pity! more's the pity, I say. — Odds life! when I heard how the lawyers and doctors had took to their own hair, I thought how 't would go next: — Odd rabbit it! when the fashion had got foot on the bar, I guessed 't would mount to the box, — but 't is all out of character, believe me, Mr. Fag: and look'ee, I'll never gi' up mine — the lawyers and doctors may do as they will.

Fag. Well, Thomas, we'll not quarrel about that.

Thos. Why, bless you, the gentlemen of the professions ben't all of a mind — for in our village now, thoff Jack Gauge, the exciseman has ta'en to his carrots, there's little Dick the farrier swears he'll never forsake his bob, though all the college should appear with their own heads!

Fag. Indeed! well said, Dick! — But hold! — mark! — mark! Thomas.

Thos. Zooks! 'tis the captain. — Is that the lady with him?

Fag. No, no, that is Madam Lucy, my master's mistress's maid. They lodge at that house — but I must after him to tell him the news.

Act First

Thos. Odd! he's giving her money!—Well, Mr. Fag——

Fag. Good-by, Thomas. I have an appointment in Gyde's Porch this evening at eight; meet me there, and we'll make a little party. [*Exeunt severally*]

SCENE II : *A Dressing-room in Mrs. MALAPROP's Lodgings*
LYDIA sitting on a sofa, with a book in her hand. *LUCY*,
as just returned from a message

Lucy. Indeed, ma'am, I traversed half the town in search of it; I don't believe there's a circulating library in Bath I ha'n't been at.

Lyd. And could not you get *The Reward of Constancy*?

Lucy. No, indeed, ma'am.

Lyd. Nor *The Fatal Connection*?

Lucy. No, indeed, ma'am.

Lyd. Nor *The Mistakes of the Heart*?

Lucy. Ma'am, as ill luck would have it, Mr. Bull said Miss Sukey Saunter had just fetched it away.

Lyd. Heigh-ho!—Did you inquire for *The Delicate Distress*?

Lucy. Or, *The Memoirs of Lady Woodford*? Yes, indeed, ma'am. I asked everywhere for it; and I might have brought it from Mr. Frederick's, but Lady Slattern Lounger, who had just sent it home, had so soiled and dog's-eared it, it wa'n't fit for a Christian to read.

Lyd. Heigh-ho!—Yes, I always know when Lady Slattern has been before me. She has a most observing

The Rivals

thumb; and, I believe, cherishes her nails for the convenience of making marginal notes.—Well, child, what have you brought me?

Lucy. Oh! here, ma'am.—[*Taking books from under her cloak, and from her pockets.*] This is *The Gordian Knot*,—and this *Peregrine Pickle*. Here are *The Tears of Sensibility* and *Humphrey Clinker*. This is *The Memoirs of a Lady of Quality*, written by herself, and here the second volume of *The Sentimental Journey*.

Lyd. Heigh-ho!—What are those books by the glass?

Lucy. The great one is only *The Whole Duty of Man*, where I press a few blonds, ma'am.

Lyd. Very well—give me the *sal volatile*.

Lucy. Is it in a blue cover, ma'am?

Lyd. My smelling-bottle, you simpleton!

Lucy. Oh, the drops;—here, ma'am.

Lyd. Hold!—here's some one coming—quick, see who it is.—[*Exit* LUCY.] Surely I heard my cousin Julia's voice.

Reënter LUCY

Lucy. Lud! ma'am, here is Miss Melville.

Lyd. Is it possible!— [Exit LUCY]

Enter JULIA

Lyd. My dearest Julia, how delighted am I!—[*Embrace.*] How unexpected was this happiness!

Jul. True, Lydia, and our pleasure is the greater.—But what has been the matter?—you were denied to me at first!



“Well, child, what have you brought me?”

"I am a very old man,
 and I have been thinking
 of you for a long time.
 I have been thinking of you
 and how you have grown
 and how you have changed.
 I have been thinking of you
 and how you have become
 a man of great power and
 of great wisdom."

"I am a very old man, and I have been thinking of you for a long time."



Act First

Lyd. Ah, Julia, I have a thousand things to tell you! —But first inform me what has conjured you to Bath? Is Sir Anthony here?

Jul. He is—we are arrived within this hour—and I suppose he will be here to wait on Mrs. Malaprop as soon as he is dressed.

Lyd. Then before we are interrupted, let me impart to you some of my distress!—I know your gentle nature will sympathize with me, though your prudence may condemn me! My letters have informed you of my whole connection with Beverley! but I have lost him, Julia! My aunt has discovered our intercourse by a note she intercepted, and has confined me ever since! Yet, would you believe it? she has absolutely fallen in love with a tall Irish baronet she met one night since we have been here, at Lady Macshuffle's rout.

Jul. You jest, Lydia!

Lyd. No, upon my word. She really carries on a kind of correspondence with him, under a feigned name though, till she chooses to be known to him;—but it is a Delia or a Celia, I assure you.

Jul. Then, surely, she is now more indulgent to her niece.

Lyd. Quite the contrary. Since she has discovered her own frailty, she is become more suspicious of mine. Then I must inform you of another plague!—That odious Acres is to be in Bath to-day; so that I protest I shall be teased out of all spirits!

Jul. Come, come, Lydia, hope for the best.—Sir Anthony shall use his interest with Mrs. Malaprop.

The Rivals

Lyd. But you have not heard the worst. Unfortunately I had quarrelled with my poor Beverley, just before my aunt made the discovery, and I have not seen him since, to make it up.

Ful. What was his offence?

Lyd. Nothing at all!—But I don't know how it was, as often as we had been together, we had never had a quarrel, and, somehow, I was afraid he would never give me an opportunity. So, last Thursday, I wrote a letter to myself, to inform myself that Beverley was at that time paying his addresses to another woman. I signed it *your friend unknown*, showed it to Beverley, charged him with his falsehood, put myself in a violent passion, and vowed I'd never see him more.

Ful. And you let him depart so, and have not seen him since?

Lyd. 'T was the next day my aunt found the matter out. I intended only to have teased him three days and a half, and now I've lost him for ever.

Ful. If he is as deserving and sincere as you have represented him to me, he will never give you up so. Yet consider, Lydia, you tell me he is but an ensign, and you have thirty thousand pounds.

Lyd. But you know I lose most of my fortune if I marry without my aunt's consent, till of age; and that is what I have determined to do, ever since I knew the penalty. Nor could I love the man, who would wish to wait a day for the alternative.

Ful. Nay, this is caprice!

Lyd. What, does Julia tax me with caprice?—I

Act First

thought her lover Faulkland had injured her to it.

Ful. I do not love even *his* faults.

Lyd. But apropos—you have sent to him, I suppose?

Ful. Not yet, upon my word—nor has he the least idea of my being in Bath. Sir Anthony's resolution was so sudden, I could not inform him of it.

Lyd. Well, Julia, you are your own mistress (though under the protection of Sir Anthony), yet have you, for this long year, been a slave to the caprice, the whim, the jealousy of this ungrateful Faulkland, who will ever delay assuming the right of a husband, while you suffer him to be equally imperious as a lover.

Ful. Nay, you are wrong entirely. We were contracted before my father's death. That, and some consequent embarrassments, have delayed what I know to be my Faulkland's most ardent wish. He is too generous to trifle on such a point:—and for his character, you wrong him there too. No, Lydia, he is too proud, too noble, to be jealous; if he is captious, 'tis without dissembling; if fretful, without rudeness. Unused to the fopperies of love, he is negligent of the little duties expected from a lover—but being unhackneyed in the passion, his affection is ardent and sincere; and as it engrosses his whole soul, he expects every thought and emotion of his mistress to move in unison with his. Yet, though his pride calls for this full return, his humility makes him undervalue those qualities in him which would entitle him to it; and not feeling why he should be loved to the degree he wishes, he still suspects that he is not loved enough. This temper, I must own, has

The Rivals

cost me many unhappy hours; but I have learned to think myself his debtor for those imperfections which arise from the ardour of his attachment.

Lyd. Well, I cannot blame you for defending him. But tell me candidly, Julia, had he never saved your life, do you think you should have been attached to him as you are?—Believe me, the rude blast that upset your boat was a prosperous gale of love to him.

Jul. Gratitude may have strengthened my attachment to Mr. Faulkland, but I loved him before he had preserved me; yet surely that alone were an obligation sufficient.

Lyd. Obligation! why a water-spaniel would have done as much!—Well, I should never think of giving my heart to a man because he could swim.

Jul. Come, Lydia, you are too inconsiderate.

Lyd. Nay, I do but jest.—What's here?

Reënter LUCY in a hurry

Lucy. O ma'am, here is Sir Anthony Absolute just come home with your aunt.

Lyd. They'll not come here.—Lucy, do you watch.

[Exit LUCY]

Jul. Yet I must go. Sir Anthony does not know I am here, and if we meet, he'll detain me, to show me the town. I'll take another opportunity of paying my respects to Mrs. Malaprop, when she shall treat me, as long as she chooses, with her select words so ingeniously *misapplied*, without being *mispronounced*.

Reënter LUCY

Lucy. O Lud! ma'am, they are both coming up-stairs.

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Act First

Lyd. Well, I'll not detain you, coz.—Adieu, my dear Julia. I'm sure you are in haste to send to Faulkland.—There—through my room you'll find another staircase.

Jul. Adieu! [Embraces LYDIA, and exit

Lyd. Here, my dear Lucy, hide these books. Quick, quick.—Fling *Peregrine Pickle* under the toilet—throw *Roderick Random* into the closet—put *The Innocent Adultery* into *The Whole Duty of Man*—thrust *Lord Aimworth* under the sofa—cram *Ovid* behind the bolster—there—put the *Man of Feeling* into your pocket—so, so—now lay *Mrs. Chapone* in sight, and leave *For-dyce's Sermons* open on the table.

Lucy. Oh, burn it, ma'am! the hair-dresser has torn away as far as *Proper Pride*.

Lyd. Never mind—open at *Sobriety*.—Fling me *Lord Chesterfield's Letters*.—Now for 'em. [Exit LUCY

Enter *Mrs. MALAPROP* and *Sir ANTHONY ABSOLUTE*

Mrs. Mal. There, Sir Anthony, there sits the deliberate simpleton who wants to disgrace her family, and lavish herself on a fellow not worth a shilling.

Lyd. Madam, I thought you once—

Mrs. Mal. You thought, miss! I don't know any business you have to think at all—thought does not become a young woman. But the point we would request of you is, that you will promise to forget this fellow—to illiterate him, I say, quite from your memory.

Lyd. Ah, madam! our memories are independent of our wills. It is not so easy to forget.

The Rivals

Mrs. Mal. But I say it is, miss; there is nothing on earth so easy as to *forget*, if a person chooses to set about it. I'm sure I have as much forgot your poor dear uncle as if he had never existed—and I thought it my duty so to do; and let me tell you, Lydia, these violent memories don't become a young woman.

Sir Anth. Why sure she won't pretend to remember what she's ordered not!—ay, this comes of her reading!

Lyd. What crime, madam, have I committed, to be treated thus?

Mrs. Mal. Now don't attempt to extirpate yourself from the matter; you know I have proof controvertible of it.—But tell me, Will you promise to do as you're bid? Will you take a husband of your friends' choosing?

Lyd. Madam, I must tell you plainly, that had I no preference for any one else, the choice you have made would be my aversion.

Mrs. Mal. What business have you, miss, with *preference* and *aversion*! They don't become a young woman; and you ought to know, that as both always wear off, 't is safest in matrimony to begin with a little *aversion*. I am sure I hated your poor dear uncle before marriage as if he'd been a blackamoor—and yet, miss, you are sensible what a wife I made!—and when it pleased Heaven to release me from him, 't is unknown what tears I shed!—But suppose we were going to give you another choice, will you promise us to give up this Beverley?

Lyd. Could I belie my thoughts so far as to give that promise, my actions would certainly as far belie my words.

Act First

Mrs. Mal. Take yourself to your room.—You are fit company for nothing but your own ill-humours.

Lyd. Willingly, ma'am.—I cannot change for the worse. [Exit

Mrs. Mal. There's a little intricate hussy for you!

Sir Anth. It is not to be wondered at, ma'am,—all this is the natural consequence of teaching girls to read. Had I a thousand daughters, by Heaven! I'd as soon have them taught the black art as their alphabet!

Mrs. Mal. Nay, nay, Sir Anthony, you are an absolute misanthropy.

Sir Anth. In my way hither, Mrs. Malaprop, I observed your niece's maid coming forth from a circulating library!—She had a book in each hand—they were half-bound volumes, with marble covers!—from that moment I guessed how full of duty I should see her mistress!

Mrs. Mal. Those are vile places, indeed!

Sir Anth. Madam, a circulating library in a town is as an evergreen tree of diabolical knowledge! It blossoms through the year!—and depend on it, Mrs. Malaprop, that they who are so fond of handling the leaves will long for the fruit at last.

Mrs. Mal. Fy, fy, Sir Anthony! you surely speak ironically.

Sir Anth. Why, Mrs. Malaprop, in moderation, now, what would you have a woman know?

Mrs. Mal. Observe me, Sir Anthony, I would by no means wish a daughter of mine to be a progeny of learning; I don't think so much learning becomes a young

The Rivals

woman; for instance, I would never let her meddle with Greek, or Hebrew, or Algebra, or Simony, or Fluxions, or Paradoxes, or such inflammatory branches of learning—neither would it be necessary for her to handle any of your mathematical, astronomical, diabolical instruments.—But, Sir Anthony, I would send her, at nine years old, to a boarding-school, in order to learn a little ingenuity and artifice. Then, sir, she should have a supercilious knowledge in accounts;—and as she grew up, I would have her instructed in geometry, that she might know something of the contagious countries;—but above all, Sir Anthony, she should be mistress of orthodoxy, that she might not misspell, and mispronounce words so shamefully as girls usually do; and likewise that she might reprehend the true meaning of what she is saying. This, Sir Anthony, is what I would have a woman know;—and I don't think there is a superstitious article in it.

Sir Anth. Well, well, Mrs. Malaprop, I will dispute the point no further with you; though I must confess that you are a truly moderate and polite arguer, for almost every third word you say is on my side of the question. But, Mrs. Malaprop, to the more important point in debate—you say you have no objection to my proposal?

Mrs. Mal. None, I assure you. I am under no positive engagement with Mr. Acres, and as Lydia is so obstinate against him, perhaps your son may have better success.

Sir Anth. Well, madam, I will write for the boy directly. He knows not a syllable of this yet, though I

Act First

have for some time had the proposal in my head. He is at present with his regiment.

Mrs. Mal. We have never seen your son, Sir Anthony; but I hope no objection on his side.

Sir Anth. Objection!—let him object if he dare!—No, no, Mrs. Malaprop, Jack knows that the least demur puts me in a frenzy directly. My process was always very simple—in their younger days 't was "Jack, do this";—if he demurred, I knocked him down—and if he grumbled at that, I always sent him out of the room.

Mrs. Mal. Ay, and the properest way, o' my conscience!—nothing is so conciliating to young people as severity.—Well, Sir Anthony, I shall give Mr. Acres his discharge, and prepare Lydia to receive your son's invocations;—and I hope you will present *her* to the captain as an object not altogether illegible.

Sir Anth. Madam, I will handle the subject prudently.—Well, I must leave you; and let me beg you, Mrs. Malaprop, to enforce this matter roundly to the girl.—Take my advice—keep a tight hand: if she rejects this proposal, clap her under lock and key; and if you were just to let the servants forget to bring her dinner for three or four days, you can't conceive how she'd come about. [Exit

Mrs. Mal. Well, at any rate I shall be glad to get her from under my intuition. She has somehow discovered my partiality for Sir Lucius O'Trigger—sure, Lucy can't have betrayed me!—No, the girl is such a simpleton, I should have made her confess it.—Lucy!—

The Rivals

Lucy!—[*Calls.*] Had she been one of your artificial ones, I should never have trusted her.

Reënter Lucy

Lucy. Did you call, ma'am?

Mrs. Mal. Yes, girl.—Did you see Sir Lucius while you was out?

Lucy. No, indeed, ma'am, not a glimpse of him.

Mrs. Mal. You are sure, Lucy, that you never mentioned—

Lucy. O Gemini! I'd sooner cut my tongue out.

Mrs. Mal. Well, don't let your simplicity be imposed on.

Lucy. No, ma'am.

Mrs. Mal. So, come to me presently, and I'll give you another letter to Sir Lucius; but mind, Lucy,—if ever you betray what you are entrusted with (unless it be other people's secrets to me), you forfeit my malevolence for ever; and your being a simpleton shall be no excuse for your locality. [*Exit*

Lucy. Ha! ha! ha!—So, my dear Simplicity, let me give you a little respite.—[*Altering her manner.*] Let girls in my station be as fond as they please of appearing expert, and knowing in their trusts; commend me to a mask of *silliness* and a pair of sharp eyes for my own interest under it!—Let me see to what account have I turned my *simplicity* lately.—[*Looks at a paper.*] *For abetting Miss Lydia Languish in a design of running away with an ensign!—in money, sundry times, twelve pounds twelve; gowns, five; hats, ruffles, caps, &c. &c., numberless!—From the said ensign, within this last month, six guineas*

Act First

and a half,—about a quarter's pay!—Item, *from Mrs. Malaprop for betraying the young people to her*—when I found matters were likely to be discovered—*two guineas, and a black padusoy*.—Item, *from Mr. Acres, for carrying divers letters*—which I never delivered—*two guineas, and a pair of buckles*.—Item, *from Sir Lucius O'Trigger, three crowns, two gold pocket-pieces, and a silver snuff-box!*—Well done, Simplicity!—Yet I was forced to make my Hibernian believe that he was corresponding, not with the *aunt*, but with the *niece*: for though not over rich, I found he had too much pride and delicacy to sacrifice the feelings of a gentleman to the necessities of his fortune.

[Exit

ACT II

SCENE I: *Captain ABSOLUTE's Lodgings*

Captain ABSOLUTE and FAG

FAG. SIR, while I was there Sir Anthony came in : I told him, you had sent me to inquire after his health, and to know if he was at leisure to see you.

Abs. And what did he say, on hearing that I was at Bath?

Fag. Sir, in my life I never saw an elderly gentleman more astonished! He started back two or three paces, rapped out a dozen interjectural oaths, and asked what the devil had brought you here.

Abs. Well, sir, and what did you say?

Fag. Oh, I lied, sir — I forget the precise lie ; but you may depend on't, he got no truth from me. Yet, with submission, for fear of blunders in future, I should be glad to fix what *has* brought us to Bath ; in order that we may lie a little consistently. Sir Anthony's servants were curious, sir, very curious indeed.

Abs. You have said nothing to them — ?

Fag. Oh, not a word, sir, — not a word! Mr. Thomas, indeed, the coachman (whom I take to be the discreetest of whips) —

Abs. 'Sdeath! — you rascal! you have not trusted him!

Fag. Oh, *no*, sir — no — no — not a syllable, upon my veracity! — he was, indeed, a little inquisitive ; but I was sly, sir — devilish sly! My master (said I), honest Thomas, (you know, sir, one says *honest* to one's inferiors,) is

The Rivals

come to Bath to *recruit*—yes, sir, I said to *recruit*—and whether for men, money, or constitution, you know, sir, is nothing to him, nor any one else.

Abs. Well, *recruit* will do—let it be so.

Fag. Oh, sir, *recruit* will do surprisingly—indeed, to give the thing an air, I told Thomas, that your honour had already enlisted five disbanded chairmen, seven minority waiters, and thirteen billiard-markers.

Abs. You blockhead, never say more than is necessary.

Fag. I beg pardon, sir—I beg pardon—but, with submission, a lie is nothing unless one supports it. Sir, whenever I draw on my invention for a good current lie, I always forge indorsements as well as the bill.

Abs. Well, take care you don't hurt your credit, by offering too much security.—Is Mr. Faulkland returned?

Fag. He is above, sir, changing his dress.

Abs. Can you tell whether he has been informed of Sir Anthony's and Miss Melville's arrival?

Fag. I fancy not, sir; he has seen no one since he came in but his gentleman, who was with him at Bristol.—I think, sir, I hear Mr. Faulkland coming down—

Abs. Go tell him I am here.

Fag. Yes, sir.—[*Going.*] I beg pardon, sir, but should Sir Anthony call, you will do me the favour to remember that we are *recruiting*, if you please.

Abs. Well, well.

Fag. And, in tenderness to my character, if your honour could bring in the chairmen and waiters, I should

Act Second

esteem it as an obligation ; for though I never scruple to lie to serve my master, yet it hurts one's conscience to be found out. [Exit

Abs. Now for my whimsical friend—if he does not know that his mistress is here, I'll tease him a little before I tell him —

Enter FAULKLAND

Faulkland, you're welcome to Bath again ; you are punctual in your return.

Faulk. Yes ; I had nothing to detain me ; when I had finished the business I went on. Well, what news since I left you ? How stand matters between you and Lydia ?

Abs. Faith, much as they were ; I have not seen her since our quarrel ; however, I expect to be recalled every hour.

Faulk. Why don't you persuade her to go off with you at once ?

Abs. What, and lose two-thirds of her fortune ? you forget that, my friend.—No, no, I could have brought her to that long ago.

Faulk. Nay then, you trifle too long—if you are sure of *her*, propose to the aunt in your own character, and write to Sir Anthony for his consent.

Abs. Softly, softly ; for though I am convinced my little Lydia would elope with me as Ensign Beverley, yet I am by no means certain that she would take me with the impediment of our friends' consent, a regular humdrum wedding, and the reversion of a good fortune on my side : no, no ; I must prepare her gradually for the discovery, and make myself necessary to her, before

The Rivals

I risk it.—Well, but Faulkland, you'll dine with us to-day at the hotel?

Faulk. Indeed I cannot; I am not in spirits to be of such a party.

Abs. By heavens! I shall forswear your company. You are the most teasing, captious, incorrigible lover! —Do love like a man.

Faulk. I own I am unfit for company.

Abs. Am not *I* a lover; ay, and a romantic one, too? Yet do I carry everywhere with me such a confounded farrago of doubts, fears, hopes, wishes, and all the flimsy furniture of a country miss's brain!

Faulk. Ah! Jack, your heart and soul are not, like mine, fixed immutably on one only object. You throw for a large stake, but losing, you could stake and throw again:—but I have set my sum of happiness on this cast, and not to succeed were to be stripped of all.

Abs. But, for Heaven's sake! what grounds for apprehension can your whimsical brain conjure up at present?

Faulk. What grounds for apprehension, did you say? Heavens! are there not a thousand! I fear for her spirits —her health—her life.—My absence may fret her; her anxiety for my return, her fears for me, may oppress her gentle temper: and for her health, does not every hour bring me cause to be alarmed? If it rains, some shower may even then have chilled her delicate frame! If the wind be keen, some rude blast may have affected her! The heat of noon, the dews of the evening, may endanger the life of her, for whom only I value mine.

Act Second

O Jack! when delicate and feeling souls are separated, there is not a feature in the sky, not a movement of the elements, not an aspiration of the breeze, but hints some cause for a lover's apprehension!

Abs. Ay, but we may choose whether we will take the hint or not.—So, then, Faulkland, if you were convinced that Julia were well and in spirits, you would be entirely content?

Faulk. I should be happy beyond measure—I am anxious only for that.

Abs. Then to cure your anxiety at once—Miss Melville is in perfect health, and is at this moment in Bath.

Faulk. Nay, Jack—don't trifle with me.

Abs. She is arrived here with my father within this hour.

Faulk. Can you be serious?

Abs. I thought you knew Sir Anthony better than to be surprised at a sudden whim of this kind.—Seriously, then, it is as I tell you—upon my honour.

Faulk. My dear friend!—Hollo, Du-Peigne! my hat.—My dear Jack—now nothing on earth can give me a moment's uneasiness.

Reënter FAG

Fag. Sir, Mr. Acres, just arrived, is below.

Abs. Stay, Faulkland; this Acres lives within a mile of Sir Anthony, and he shall tell you how your mistress has been ever since you left her.—Fag, show the gentleman up. *[Exit FAG]*

Faulk. What, is he much acquainted in the family?

The Rivals

Abs. Oh, very intimate : I insist on your not going : besides, his character will divert you.

Faulk. Well, I should like to ask him a few questions.

Abs. He is likewise a rival of mine—that is, of my *other self's*, for he does not think his friend Captain Absolute ever saw the lady in question; and it is ridiculous enough to hear him complain to me of *one Beverley*, a concealed skulking rival, who—

Faulk. Hush!—he's here.

Enter ACRES

Acres. Ha! my dear friend, noble captain, and honest Jack, how do'st thou? just arrived, faith, as you see.—Sir, your humble servant.—Warm work on the roads, Jack!—Odds whips and wheels! I've travelled like a comet, with a tail of dust all the way as long as the Mall.

Abs. Ah! Bob, you are indeed an eccentric planet, but we know your attraction hither.—Give me leave to introduce Mr. Faulkland to you; Mr. Faulkland, Mr. Acres.

Acres. Sir, I am most heartily glad to see you: sir, I solicit your connections.—Hey, Jack—what, this is Mr. Faulkland, who—

Abs. Ay, Bob, Miss Melville's Mr. Faulkland.

Acres. Odso! she and your father can be but just arrived before me:—I suppose you have seen them. Ah! Mr. Faulkland, you are indeed a happy man.

Faulk. I have not seen Miss Melville yet, sir;—I hope she enjoyed full health and spirits in Devonshire?

Acres. Never knew her better in my life, sir,—never

Act Second

better. Odds blushes and blooms! she has been as healthy as the German Spa.

Faulk. Indeed!—I did hear that she had been a little indisposed.

Acres. False, false, sir—only said to vex you: quite the reverse, I assure you.

Faulk. There Jack, you see she has the advantage of me; I had almost fretted myself ill.

Abs. Now are you angry with your mistress for not having been sick?

Faulk. No, no, you misunderstand me: yet surely a little trifling indisposition is not an unnatural consequence of absence from those we love.—Now confess—is n't there something unkind in this violent, robust, unfeeling health?

Abs. Oh, it was very unkind of her to be well in your absence, to be sure!

Acres. Good apartments, Jack.

Faulk. Well, sir, but you were saying that Miss Melville has been so *exceedingly* well—what then, she has been merry and gay, I suppose?—Always in spirits—hey?

Acres. Merry, odds crickets! she has been the belle and spirit of the company wherever she has been—so lively and entertaining! so full of wit and humour!

Faulk. There, Jack, there.—Oh, by my soul! there is an innate levity in woman, that nothing can overcome.—What! happy, and I away!

Abs. Have done! How foolish this is! just now you were only apprehensive for your mistress's spirits.

The Rivals

Faulk. Why, Jack, have I been the joy and spirit of the company?

Abs. No indeed, you have not.

Faulk. Have I been lively and entertaining?

Abs. Oh, upon my word, I acquit you.

Faulk. Have I been full of wit and humour?

Abs. No, faith, to do you justice, you have been confoundedly stupid indeed.

Acres. What's the matter with the gentleman?

Abs. He is only expressing his great satisfaction at hearing that Julia has been so well and happy—that's all—hey, Faulkland?

Faulk. Oh! I am rejoiced to hear it—yes, yes, she has a happy disposition!

Acres. That she has indeed—then she is so accomplished—so sweet a voice—so expert at her harpsichord—such a mistress of flat and sharp, squallante, rumblante, and quiverante!—There was this time month—Odds minims and crotchets! how she did chirrup at Mrs. Piano's concert!

Faulk. There again, what say you to this? you see she has been all mirth and song—not a thought of me!

Abs. Pho! man, is not music the food of love?

Faulk. Well, well, it may be so.—Pray, Mr.—, what's his damned name?—Do you remember what songs Miss Melville sung?

Acres. Not I indeed.

Abs. Stay, now, they were some pretty melancholy purling-stream airs, I warrant; perhaps you may recol-

Act Second

left;—did she sing, *When absent from my soul's delight?*

Acres. No, that wa'n't it.

Abs. Or, *Go, gentle gales! — Go, gentle gales!*

[*Sings*

Acres. Oh, no! nothing like it. Odds! now I recollect one of them—*My heart's my own, my will is free.*

[*Sings*

Faulk. Fool! fool that I am! to fix all my happiness on such a trifle! 'Sdeath! to make herself the pipe and ballad-monger of a circle! to soothe her light heart with catches and glees!—What can you say to this, sir?

Abs. Why, that I should be glad to hear my mistress had been so merry, *sir*.

Faulk. Nay, nay, nay—I'm not sorry that she has been happy—no, no, I am glad of that—I would not have had her sad or sick—yet surely a sympathetic heart would soon have shown itself even in the choice of a song—she might have been temperately healthy, and somehow, plaintively gay;—but she has been dancing too, I doubt not!

Acres. What does the gentleman say about dancing?

Abs. He says the lady we speak of dances as well as she sings.

Acres. Ay, truly, does she—there was at our last race ball—

Faulk. Hell and the devil! There! there—I told you so! I told you so! Oh! she thrives in my absence!—Dancing! but her whole feelings have been in opposition with mine;— I have been anxious, silent, pensive, sedentary—my days have been hours of care, my nights

The Rivals

of watchfulness.—She has been all health! spirit! laugh! song! dance!—Oh! damned, damned levity!

Abs. For Heaven's sake, Faulkland, don't expose yourself so!—Suppose she has danced, what then?—does not the ceremony of society often oblige—

Faulk. Well, well, I'll contain myself—perhaps as you say—for form sake.—What, Mr. Acres, you were praising Miss Melville's manner of dancing a *minuet*—hey?

Acres. Oh, I dare insure her for that—but what I was going to speak of was her *country-dancing*. Odds swim-mings! she has such an air with her!

Faulk. Now disappointment on her!—Defend this, Absolute; why don't you defend this?—Country-dances! jigs and reels! am I to blame now? A minuet I could have forgiven—I should not have minded that—I say I should not have regarded a minuet—but *country-dances*!—Zounds! had she made one in a cotillon—I believe I could have forgiven even that—but to be monkey-led for a night!—to run the gauntlet through a string of amorous palming puppies!—to show paces like a managed filly!—Oh, Jack, there never can be but one man in the world whom a truly modest and delicate woman ought to pair with in a *country-dance*; and, even then, the rest of the couples should be her great-uncles and aunts!

Abs. Ay, to be sure! grandfathers and grandmothers!

Faulk. If there be but one vicious mind in the set 't will spread like a contagion—the action of their pulse beats to the lascivious movement of the jig—their quivering, warm-breathed sighs impregnate the very air—the



“ My hair has been in training for some time ”

"omit since not granted in case of the M."



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Act Second

atmosphere becomes electrical to love, and each amorous spark darts through every link of the chain!—I must leave you—I own I am somewhat flurried—and that confounded looby has perceived it. [Going]

Abs. Nay, but stay, Faulkland, and thank Mr. Acres for his good news.

Faulk. Damn his news! [Exit]

Abs. Ha! ha! ha! poor Faulkland, five minutes since—“nothing on earth could give him a moment’s uneasiness!”

Acres. The gentleman wa’n’t angry at my praising his mistress, was he?

Abs. A little jealous, I believe, Bob.

Acres. You don’t say so? Ha! ha! jealous of me—that’s a good joke.

Abs. There’s nothing strange in that, Bob; let me tell you, that sprightly grace and insinuating manner of yours will do some mischief among the girls here.

Acres. Ah! you joke—ha! ha! mischief!—ha! ha! but you know I am not my own property; my dear Lydia has forestalled me. She could never abide me in the country, because I used to dress so badly—but odds frogs and tambours! I shan’t take matters so here, now ancient madam has no voice in it: I’ll make my old clothes know who’s master. I shall straightway cashier the hunting-frock, and render my leather breeches incapable. My hair has been in training some time.

Abs. Indeed!

Acres. Ay—and thoff the side curls are a little restive, my hind-part takes it very kindly.

The Rivals

Abs. Oh, you'll polish, I doubt not.

Acres. Absolutely I propose so—then if I can find out this Ensign Beverley, odds triggers and flints! I'll make him know the difference o't.

Abs. Spoke like a man! But pray, Bob, I observe you have got an odd kind of a new method of swearing—

Acres. Ha! ha! you've taken notice of it—'t is genteel, is n't it?—I did n't invent it myself, though; but a commander in our militia, a great scholar, I assure you, says that there is no meaning in the common oaths, and that nothing but their antiquity makes them respectable;—because, he says, the ancients would never stick to an oath or two, but would say, by Jove! or by Bacchus! or by Mars! or by Venus! or by Pallas! according to the sentiment: so that to swear with propriety, says my little major, the oath should be an echo to the sense; and this we call the *oath referential* or *sentimental swearing*—ha! ha! 't is genteel, is n't it?

Abs. Very genteel, and very new, indeed!—and I dare say will supplant all other figures of imprecation.

Acres. Ay, ay, the best terms will grow obsolete.—Damns have had their day.

Reënter FAG

Fag. Sir, there is a gentleman below desires to see you.—Shall I show him into the parlour?

Abs. Ay—you may.

Acres. Well, I must be gone—

Abs. Stay; who is it, Fag?

Fag. Your father, sir.

Act Second

Abs. You puppy, why did n't you show him up directly? [Exit FAG]

Acres. You have business with Sir Anthony.—I expect a message from Mrs. Malaprop at my lodgings. I have sent also to my dear friend Sir Lucius O'Trigger. Adieu, Jack! we must meet at night, when you shall give me a dozen bumpers to little Lydia.

Abs. That I will with all my heart.—[Exit ACRES.] Now for a parental lecture—I hope he has heard nothing of the business that has brought me here—I wish the gout had held him fast in Devonshire, with all my soul!

Enter Sir ANTHONY ABSOLUTE

Sir, I am delighted to see you here: looking so well! your sudden arrival at Bath made me apprehensive for your health.

Sir Anth. Very apprehensive, I dare say, Jack.—What, you are recruiting here, hey?

Abs. Yes, sir, I am on duty.

Sir Anth. Well, Jack, I am glad to see you, though I did not expect it, for I was going to write you on a little matter of business.—Jack, I have been considering that I grow old and infirm, and shall probably not trouble you long.

Abs. Pardon me, sir, I never saw you look more strong and hearty; and I pray frequently that you may continue so.

Sir Anth. I hope your prayers may be heard, with all my heart. Well then, Jack, I have been considering that I am so strong and hearty I may continue to plague you

The Rivals

a long time.—Now, Jack, I am sensible that the income of your commission, and what I have hitherto allowed you, is but a small pittance for a lad of your spirit.

Abs. Sir, you are very good.

Sir Anth. And it is my wish, while yet I live, to have my boy make some figure in the world. I have resolved, therefore, to fix you at once in a noble independence.

Abs. Sir, your kindness overpowers me—such generosity makes the gratitude of reason more lively than the sensations even of filial affection.

Sir Anth. I am glad you are so sensible of my attention—and you shall be master of a large estate in a few weeks.

Abs. Let my future life, sir, speak my gratitude; I cannot express the sense I have of your munificence.—Yet, sir, I presume you would not wish me to quit the army?

Sir Anth. Oh, that shall be as your wife chooses.

Abs. My wife, sir!

Sir Anth. Ay, ay, settle that between you—settle that between you.

Abs. A wife, sir, did you say?

Sir Anth. Ay, a wife—why, did not I mention her before?

Abs. Not a word of her, sir.

Sir Anth. Odd so!—I must n't forget *her*, though.—Yes, Jack, the independence I was talking of is by marriage—the fortune is saddled with a wife—but I suppose that makes no difference.

Act Second

Abs. Sir! sir!—you amaze me!

Sir Anth. Why, what the devil's the matter with the fool? Just now you were all gratitude and duty.

Abs. I was, sir,—you talked to me of independence and a fortune, but not a word of a wife.

Sir Anth. Why—what difference does that make? Odds life, sir! if you have the estate, you must take it with the live-stock on it, as it stands.

Abs. If my happiness is to be the price, I must beg leave to decline the purchase.—Pray, sir, who is the lady?

Sir Anth. What's that to you, sir? Come, give me your promise to love, and to marry her directly.

Abs. Sure, sir, this is not very reasonable to summon my affections for a lady I know nothing of!

Sir Anth. I am sure, sir, 't is more unreasonable in you to *object* to a lady you know nothing of.

Abs. Then, sir, I must tell you plainly that my inclinations are fixed on another—my heart is engaged to an angel.

Sir Anth. Then pray let it send an excuse. It is very sorry—but *business* prevents its waiting on her.

Abs. But my vows are pledged to her.

Sir Anth. Let her foreclose, Jack; let her foreclose; they are not worth redeeming; besides, you have the angel's vows in exchange, I suppose; so there can be no loss there.

Abs. You must excuse me, sir, if I tell you, once for all, that in this point I cannot obey you.

Sir Anth. Hark'ee, Jack;—I have heard you for

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some time with patience—I have been cool—quite cool; but take care—you know I am compliance itself—when I am not thwarted;—no one more easily led—when I have my own way;—but don't put me in a frenzy.

Abs. Sir, I must repeat it—in this I cannot obey you.

Sir Anth. Now damn me! if ever I call you Jack again while I live!

Abs. Nay, sir, but hear me.

Sir Anth. Sir, I won't hear a word—not a word! not one word! so give me your promise by a nod—and I'll tell you what, Jack—I mean, you dog—if you don't, by—

Abs. What, sir, promise to link myself to some mass of ugliness! to—

Sir Anth. Zounds! sirrah! the lady shall be as ugly as I choose: she shall have a hump on each shoulder! she shall be as crooked as the Crescent; her one eye shall roll like the bull's in Cox's Museum; she shall have a skin like a mummy, and the beard of a Jew—she shall be all this, sirrah!—yet I will make you ogle her all day, and sit up all night to write sonnets on her beauty.

Abs. This is reason and moderation indeed!

Sir Anth. None of your sneering, puppy! no grinning, jackanapes!

Abs. Indeed, sir, I never was in a worse humour for mirth in my life.

Sir Anth. 'Tis false, sir; I know you are laughing in your sleeve; I know you'll grin when I am gone, sirrah!

Act Second

Abs. Sir, I hope I know my duty better.

Sir Anth. None of your passion, sir! none of your violence, if you please!—It won't do with me, I promise you.

Abs. Indeed, sir, I never was cooler in my life.

Sir Anth. 'Tis a confounded lie!—I know you are in a passion in your heart; I know you are, you hypocritical young dog! but it won't do.

Abs. Nay, sir, upon my word—

Sir Anth. So you will fly out! can't you be cool like me? What the devil good can *passion* do?—*Passion* is of no service, you impudent, insolent, overbearing reprobate!—There, you sneer again!—don't provoke me!—but you rely upon the mildness of my temper—you do, you dog! you play upon the meekness of my disposition!—Yet take care—the patience of a saint may be overcome at last!—but mark! I give you six hours and a half to consider of this: if you then agree, without any condition, to do everything on earth that I choose, why—confound you! I may in time forgive you.—If not, zounds! don't enter the same hemisphere with me! don't dare to breathe the same air or use the same light with me; but get an atmosphere and sun of your own! I'll strip you of your commission; I'll lodge a five-and-threepence in the hands of trustees, and you shall live on the interest.—I'll disown you, I'll disinherit you, I'll unget you! and damn me! if ever I call you Jack again! [Exit

Abs. Mild, gentle, considerate father—I kiss your hands!—What a tender method of giving his opinion

The Rivals

in these matters Sir Anthony has! I dare not trust him with the truth.—I wonder what old wealthy hag it is that he wants to bestow on me!—Yet he married himself for love! and was in his youth a bold intriguer, and a gay companion!

Reënter FAG

Fag. Assuredly, sir, your father is wrath to a degree; he comes down-stairs eight or ten steps at a time—muttering, growling, and thumping the banisters all the way: I and the cook's dog stand bowing at the door—rap! he gives me a stroke on the head with his cane; bids me carry that to my master; then kicking the poor turnspit into the area, damns us all, for a puppy triumvirate!—Upon my credit, sir, were I in your place, and found my father such very bad company, I should certainly drop his acquaintance.

Abs. Cease your impertinence, sir, at present.—Did you come in for nothing more?—Stand out of the way.

[Pushes him aside, and exit

Fag. Soh! Sir Anthony trims my master: he is afraid to reply to his father—then vents his spleen on poor Fag!—When one is vexed by one person, to revenge one's self on another, who happens to come in the way, is the vilest injustice! Ah! it shows the worst temper—the basest—

Enter ERRAND BOY

Boy. Mr. Fag! Mr. Fag! your master calls you.

Fag. Well, you little dirty puppy, you need not bawl so!—The meanest disposition! the—

Boy. Quick, quick, Mr. Fag!

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Act Second

Fag. Quick! quick! you impudent jackanapes! am I to be commanded by you too? you little impertinent, insolent, kitchen-bred—

[*Exit, kicking and beating him*]

SCENE II: *The North Parade*

Enter LUCY

Lucy. So—I shall have another rival to add to my mistress's list—Captain Absolute. However, I shall not enter his name till my purse has received notice in form. Poor Acres is dismissed!—Well, I have done him a last friendly office, in letting him know that Beverley was here before him.—Sir Lucius is generally more punctual, when he expects to hear from his *dear Delia*, as he calls her: I wonder he's not here!—I have a little scruple of conscience from this deceit; though I should not be paid so well, if my hero knew that *Delia* was near fifty, and her own mistress.

Enter Sir LUCIUS O'TRIGGER

Sir Luc. Ha! my little ambassadress—upon my conscience, I have been looking for you; I have been on the South Parade this half hour.

Lucy. [*Speaking simply.*] O Gemini! and I have been waiting for your worship here on the North.

Sir Luc. Faith! may be that was the reason we did not meet; and it's very comical too, how you could go out and I not see you—for I was only taking a nap at the Parade Coffee-house, and I chose the window on purpose that I might not miss you.

The Rivals

Lucy. My stars! Now I'd wager a sixpence I went by while you were asleep.

Sir Luc. Sure enough, it must have been so—and I never dreamt it was so late, till I waked. Well, but my girl, have you got nothing for me?

Lucy. Yes, but I have—I've got a letter for you in my pocket.

Sir Luc. Oh, faith! I guessed you were n't come empty-handed—well—let me see what the dear creature says.

Lucy. There, Sir Lucius. [Gives him a letter]

Sir Luc. [Reads.] *Sir—there is often a sudden incentive impulse in love, that has a greater induction than years of domestic combination: such was the commotion I felt at the first superfluous view of Sir Lucius O' Trigger.—Very pretty, upon my word.—Female punctuation forbids me to say more, yet let me add, that it will give me joy infallible to find Sir Lucius worthy the last criterion of my affections.*

DELIA

Upon my conscience! Lucy, your lady is a great mistress of language. Faith, she's quite the queen of the dictionary!—for the devil a word dare refuse coming to her call—though one would think it was quite out of hearing.

Lucy. Ay, sir, a lady of her experience—

Sir Luc. Experience? what, at seventeen?

Lucy. Oh, true, sir—but then she reads so—my stars! how she will read offhand!

Sir Luc. Faith she must be very deep read to write this way—though she is rather an arbitrary writer too



“Take a kiss beforehand to put you in mind”

“Take a hint before it is too late for you in mind.”



Act Second

—for here are a great many poor words pressed into the service of this note that would get their *habeas corpus* from any court in Christendom.

Lucy. Ah! Sir Lucius, if you were to hear how she talks of you!

Sir Luc. Oh, tell her I'll make her the best husband in the world, and Lady O'Trigger into the bargain!—But we must get the old gentlewoman's consent—and do everything fairly.

Lucy. Nay, Sir Lucius, I thought you wa'n't rich enough to be so nice!

Sir Luc. Upon my word, young woman, you have hit it:—I am so poor, that I can't afford to do a dirty action.—If I did not want money, I'd steal your mistress and her fortune with a great deal of pleasure.—However, my pretty girl, [*gives her money*] here's a little something to buy you a ribbon; and meet me in the evening, and I'll give you an answer to this. So, hussy, take a kiss beforehand to put you in mind. [*Kisses her*]

Lucy. O Lud! Sir Lucius—I never seed such a gentleman. My lady won't like you if you're so impudent.

Sir Luc. Faith she will, Lucy!—That same—pho! what's the name of it?—*modesty*—is a quality in a lover more praised by the women than liked; so, if your mistress asks you whether Sir Lucius ever gave you a kiss, tell her fifty—my dear.

Lucy. What, would you have me tell her a lie?

Sir Luc. Ah, then, you baggage! I'll make it a truth presently.

Lucy. For shame now! here is some one coming.

The Rivals

Sir Luc. Oh, faith, I'll quiet your conscience!

[*Sees FAG.—Exit, humming a tune*

Enter FAG

Fag. So, so, ma'am! I humbly beg pardon.

Lucy. O Lud! now, Mr. Fag—you flurry one so.

Fag. Come, come, Lucy, here's no one by—so a little less simplicity, with a grain or two more sincerity, if you please.—You play false with us, madam.—I saw you give the baronet a letter.—My master shall know this—and if he don't call him out, I will.

Lucy. Ha! ha! ha! you gentlemen's gentlemen are so hasty.—That letter was from Mrs. Malaprop, simpleton.—She is taken with Sir Lucius's address.

Fag. How! what tastes some people have!—Why, I suppose I have walked by her window a hundred times.—But what says our young lady? any message to my master?

Lucy. Sad news, Mr. Fag.—A worse rival than Acres! Sir Anthony Absolute has proposed his son.

Fag. What, Captain Absolute?

Lucy. Even so—I overheard it all.

Fag. Ha! ha! ha! very good, faith. Good-by, Lucy; I must away with this news.

Lucy. Well, you may laugh—but it is true, I assure you.—[*Going.*] But, Mr. Fag, tell your master not to be cast down by this.

Fag. Oh, he'll be so disconsolate!

Lucy. And charge him not to think of quarrelling with young Absolute.

Act Second

Fag. Never fear! never fear!

Lucy. Be sure—bid him keep up his spirits.

Fag. We will—we will. *[Exeunt severally]*

ACT III

SCENE I: *The North Parade*

Enter CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE

ABS. 'T is just as Fag told me, indeed. Whimsical enough, faith! My father wants to force me to marry the very girl I am plotting to run away with! He must not know of my connection with her yet awhile. He has too summary a method of proceeding in these matters. However, I'll read my recantation instantly. My conversion is something sudden, indeed—but I can assure him it is very sincere. So, so—here he comes. He looks plaguy gruff. [*Steps aside*

Enter Sir ANTHONY ABSOLUTE

Sir Anth. No, I'll die sooner than forgive him. Die, did I say? I'll live these fifty years to plague him. At our last meeting, his impudence had almost put me out of temper. An obstinate, passionate, self-willed boy! Who can he take after? This is my return for getting him before all his brothers and sisters!—for putting him, at twelve years old, into a marching regiment, and allowing him fifty pounds a year, besides his pay, ever since! But I have done with him; he's anybody's son for me. I never will see him more, never—never—never.

Abs. [*Aside, coming forward.*] Now for a penitential face.

Sir Anth. Fellow, get out of my way!

The Rivals

Abs. Sir, you see a penitent before you.

Sir Anth. I see an impudent scoundrel before me.

Abs. A sincere penitent. I am come, sir, to acknowledge my error, and to submit entirely to your will.

Sir Anth. What's that?

Abs. I have been revolving, and reflecting, and considering on your past goodness, and kindness, and condescension to me.

Sir Anth. Well, sir?

Abs. I have been likewise weighing and balancing what you were pleased to mention concerning duty, and obedience, and authority.

Sir Anth. Well, puppy?

Abs. Why then, sir, the result of my reflections is—a resolution to sacrifice every inclination of my own to your satisfaction.

Sir Anth. Why, now you talk sense—absolute sense—I never heard anything more sensible in my life. Confound you! you shall be Jack again.

Abs. I am happy in the appellation.

Sir Anth. Why, then, Jack, my dear Jack, I will now inform you who the lady really is. Nothing but your passion and violence, you silly fellow, prevented my telling you at first. Prepare, Jack, for wonder and rapture—prepare. What think you of Miss Lydia Languish?

Abs. Languish! What, the Languishes of Worcestershire?

Sir Anth. Worcestershire! no. Did you never meet Mrs. Malaprop and her niece, Miss Languish, who came

Act Third

into our country just before you were last ordered to your regiment?

Abs. Malaprop! Languish! I don't remember ever to have heard the names before. Yet, stay—I think I do recollect something. Languish! Languish! She squints, don't she? A little red-haired girl?

Sir Anth. Squints! a red-haired girl! Zounds! no.

Abs. Then I must have forgot; it can't be the same person.

Sir Anth. Jack! Jack! what think you of blooming, love-breathing seventeen?

Abs. As to that, sir, I am quite indifferent. If I can please you in the matter, 'tis all I desire.

Sir Anth. Nay, but, Jack, such eyes! such eyes! so innocently wild! so bashfully irresolute! not a glance but speaks and kindles some thought of love! Then, Jack, her cheeks! her cheeks, Jack! so deeply blushing at the insinuations of her tell-tale eyes! Then, Jack, her lips! O Jack, lips smiling at their own discretion; and if not smiling, more sweetly pouting; more lovely in sullenness!

Abs. That's she indeed. Well done, old gentleman.

[*Aside*

Sir Anth. Then, Jack, her neck! O Jack! Jack!

Abs. And which is to be mine, sir, the niece or the aunt?

Sir Anth. Why, you unfeeling, insensible puppy, I despise you! When I was of your age, such a description would have made me fly like a rocket! The aunt, indeed! Odds life! when I ran away with your mother, I would

The Rivals

not have touched anything old or ugly to gain an empire.

Abs. Not to please your father, sir?

Sir Anth. To please my father! zounds! not to please—Oh, my father—odd so!—yes—yes; if my father indeed had desired—that's quite another matter. Though he wa'n't the indulgent father that I am, Jack.

Abs. I dare say not, sir.

Sir Anth. But, Jack, you are not sorry to find your mistress is so beautiful?

Abs. Sir, I repeat it—if I please you in this affair, 'tis all I desire. Not that I think a woman the worse for being handsome; but, sir, if you please to recollect, you before hinted something about a hump or two, one eye, and a few more graces of that kind—now, without being very nice, I own I should rather choose a wife of mine to have the usual number of limbs, and a limited quantity of back; and though one eye may be very agreeable, yet as the prejudice has always run in favour of two, I would not wish to affect a singularity in that article.

Sir Anth. What a phlegmatic sot it is! Why, sirrah, you're an anchorite!—a vile, insensible stock. You a soldier!—you're a walking block, fit only to dust the company's regimentals on! Odds life! I have a great mind to marry the girl myself.

Abs. I am entirely at your disposal, sir: if you should think of addressing Miss Languish yourself, I suppose you would have me marry the aunt; or if you should change your mind and take the old lady—'t is the same to me—I'll marry the niece.

Act Third

Sir Anth. Upon my word, Jack, thou'rt either a very great hypocrite, or—but come, I know your indifference on such a subject must be all a lie—I'm sure it must—come, now—damn your demure face!—come, confess, Jack—you have been lying—ha'n't you? You have been playing the hypocrite, hey!—I'll never forgive you, if you ha'n't been lying and playing the hypocrite.

Abs. I'm sorry, sir, that the respect and duty which I bear to you should be so mistaken.

Sir Anth. Hang your respect and duty! But come along with me; I'll write a note to Mrs. Malaprop, and you shall visit the lady directly. Her eyes shall be the Promethean torch to you—come along; I'll never forgive you, if you don't come back stark mad with rapture and impatience—if you don't, egad, I will marry the girl myself! [*Exeunt*

SCENE II: JULIA'S Dressing-room

FAULKLAND discovered alone

Faulk. They told me Julia would return directly; I wonder she is not yet come! How mean does this capitious, unsatisfied temper of mine appear to my cooler judgment! Yet I know not that I indulge it in any other point; but on this one subject, and to this one subject, whom I think I love beyond my life, I am ever ungenerously fretful and madly capricious! I am conscious of it—yet I cannot correct myself! What tender, honest joy sparkled in her eyes when we met!

The Rivals

how delicate was the warmth of her expressions! I was ashamed to appear less happy—though I had come resolved to wear a face of coolness and upbraiding. Sir Anthony's presence prevented my proposed expostulations: yet I must be satisfied that she has not been so very happy in my absence. She is coming! Yes!—I know the nimbleness of her tread, when she thinks her impatient Faulkland counts the moments of her stay.

Enter JULIA

Jul. I had not hoped to see you again so soon.

Faulk. Could I, Julia, be contented with my first welcome—restrained as we were by the presence of a third person?

Jul. O Faulkland, when your kindness can make me thus happy, let me not think that I discovered something of coldness in your first salutation.

Faulk. 'Twas but your fancy, Julia. I was rejoiced to see you—to see you in such health. Sure I had no cause for coldness?

Jul. Nay, then, I see you have taken something ill. You must not conceal from me what it is.

Faulk. Well, then, shall I own to you that my joy at hearing of your health and arrival here, by your neighbour Acres, was somewhat damped by his dwelling much on the high spirits you had enjoyed in Devonshire—on your mirth—your singing—dancing, and I know not what? For such is my temper, Julia, that I should regard every mirthful moment in your absence as a treason to constancy. The mutual tear that steals down the cheek of parting lovers is a compact that no smile

Act Third

shall live there till they meet again.

Ful. Must I never cease to tax my Faulkland with this teasing minute caprice? Can the idle reports of a silly boor weigh in your breast against my tried affection?

Faulk. They have no weight with me, Julia: no, no—I am happy if you have been so—yet only say that you did not sing with mirth—say that you thought of Faulkland in the dance.

Ful. I never can be happy in your absence. If I wear a countenance of content, it is to show that my mind holds no doubt of my Faulkland's truth. If I seemed sad, it were to make malice triumph; and say that I had fixed my heart on one who left me to lament his roving and my own credulity. Believe me, Faulkland, I mean not to upbraid you when I say that I have often dressed sorrow in smiles, lest my friends should guess whose unkindness had caused my tears.

Faulk. You were ever all goodness to me. Oh, I am a brute, when I but admit a doubt of your true constancy!

Ful. If ever without such cause from you, as I will not suppose possible, you find my affections veering but a point, may I become a proverbial scoff for levity and base ingratitude.

Faulk. Ah! Julia, that last word is grating to me. I would I had no title to your gratitude! Search your heart, Julia; perhaps what you have mistaken for love is but the warm effusion of a too thankful heart.

Ful. For what quality must I love you?

The Rivals

Faulk. For no quality! To regard me for any quality of mind or understanding were only to esteem me. And for person—I have often wished myself deformed, to be convinced that I owed no obligation there for any part of your affection.

Ful. Where nature has bestowed a show of nice attention in the features of a man, he should laugh at it as misplaced. I have seen men, who in this vain article, perhaps, might rank above you; but my heart has never asked my eyes if it were so or not.

Faulk. Now this is not well from you, Julia—I despise person in a man—yet if you loved me as I wish, though I were an Æthiop, you'd think none so fair.

Ful. I see you are determined to be unkind! The contract which my poor father bound us in gives you more than a lover's privilege.

Faulk. Again, Julia, you raise ideas that feed and justify my doubts. I would not have been more free—no—I am proud of my restraint. Yet—yet—perhaps your high respect alone for this solemn compact has fettered your inclinations, which else had made a worthier choice. How shall I be sure, had you remained unbound in thought and promise, that I should still have been the object of your persevering love?

Ful. Then try me now. Let us be free as strangers as to what is past: my heart will not feel more liberty!

Faulk. There now! so hasty, Julia! so anxious to be free! If your love for me were fixed and ardent, you would not lose your hold even though I wished it!

Ful. Oh! you torture me to the heart! I cannot bear it!

Act Third

Faulk. I do not mean to distress you. If I loved you less I should never give you an uneasy moment. But hear me. All my fretful doubts arise from this. Women are not used to weigh and separate the motives of their affections: the cold dictates of prudence, gratitude, or filial duty may sometimes be mistaken for the pleadings of the heart. I would not boast—yet let me say that I have neither age, person, nor character to found dislike on; my fortune such as few ladies could be charged with indiscretion in the match. O Julia! when love receives such countenance from prudence, nice minds will be suspicious of its birth.

Jul. I know not whither your insinuations would tend:—but as they seem pressing to insult me, I will spare you the regret of having done so. I have given you no cause for this! *[Exit in tears]*

Faulk. In tears! Stay, Julia: stay but for a moment.—The door is fastened!—Julia!—my soul!—but for one moment!—I hear her sobbing—'Sdeath!—what a brute am I to use her thus! Yet stay.—Ay—she is coming now:—how little resolution there is in woman!—how a few soft words can turn them!—No, faith!—she is not coming either.—Why, Julia—my love—say but that you forgive me—come but to tell me that—now this is being too resentful. Stay! she is coming too—I thought she would—no steadiness in anything: her going away must have been a mere trick, then—she shan't see that I was hurt by it.—I'll affect indifference—*[Hums a tune: then listens.]* No—zounds! she's not coming!—nor don't intend it, I suppose.—

The Rivals

This is not steadiness, but obstinacy! Yet I deserve it.—What, after so long an absence to quarrel with her tenderness!—’t was barbarous and unmanly! I should be ashamed to see her now.—I’ll wait till her just resentment is abated—and when I distress her so again, may I lose her for ever! and be linked instead to some antique virago, whose gnawing passions and long-hoarded spleen shall make me curse my folly half the day and all the night. [Exit

SCENE III: *Mrs. MALAPROP’s Lodgings*

Mrs. MALAPROP, with a letter in her hand, and Captain ABSOLUTE

Mrs. Mal. Your being Sir Anthony’s son, captain, would itself be a sufficient accommodation; but from the ingenuity of your appearance, I am convinced you deserve the character here given of you.

Abs. Permit me to say, madam, that as I never yet have had the pleasure of seeing Miss Languish, my principal inducement in this affair at present is the honour of being allied to Mrs. Malaprop, of whose intellectual accomplishments, elegant manners, and unaffected learning, no tongue is silent.

Mrs. Mal. Sir, you do me infinite honour! I beg, captain, you’ll be seated.—[*They sit.*] Ah! few gentlemen, now-a-days, know how to value the ineffectual qualities in a woman! few think how a little knowledge becomes a gentlewoman!—Men have no sense now but for the worthless flower of beauty!



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Act Third

Abs. It is but too true, indeed, ma'am ;—yet I fear our ladies should share the blame—they think our admiration of beauty so great that knowledge in them would be superfluous. Thus, like garden-trees, they seldom show fruit till time has robbed them of the more specious blossom.—Few, like Mrs. Malaprop and the orange-tree, are rich in both at once!

Mrs. Mal. Sir, you overpower me with good breeding.—He is the very pine-apple of politeness! You are not ignorant, captain, that this giddy girl has somehow contrived to fix her affections on a beggarly, strolling, eaves-dropping ensign, whom none of us have seen, and nobody knows anything of.

Abs. Oh, I have heard the silly affair before.—I'm not at all prejudiced against her on that account.

Mrs. Mal. You are very good and very considerate, captain. I am sure I have done everything in my power since I exploded the affair ; long ago I laid my positive conjunctions on her, never to think on the fellow again ; —I have since laid Sir Anthony's preposition before her ; but I am sorry to say she seems resolved to decline every particle that I enjoin her.

Abs. It must be very distressing, indeed, ma'am.

Mrs. Mal. Oh, it gives me the hydrostatics to such a degree.—I thought she had persisted from corresponding with him ; but, behold, this very day, I have interceded another letter from the fellow ; I believe I have it in my pocket.

Abs. Oh, the devil! my last note.

[*Aside*

Mrs. Mal. Ay, here it is.

The Rivals

Abs. Ay, my note indeed! O the little traitress Lucy!

[*Aside*

Mrs. Mal. There, perhaps you may know the writing.
[*Gives him the letter*

Abs. I think I have seen the hand before—yes, I certainly must have seen this hand before—

Mrs. Mal. Nay, but read it, captain.

Abs. [*Reads.*] *My soul's idol, my adored Lydia!*—Very tender indeed!

Mrs. Mal. Tender! ay, and profane too, o' my conscience.

Abs. [*Reads.*] *I am excessively alarmed at the intelligence you send me, the more so as my new rival—*

Mrs. Mal. That's you, sir.

Abs. [*Reads.*] *Has universally the character of being an accomplished gentleman and a man of honour.*—Well, that's handsome enough.

Mrs. Mal. Oh, the fellow has some design in writing so.

Abs. That he had, I'll answer for him, ma'am.

Mrs. Mal. But go on, sir—you'll see presently.

Abs. [*Reads.*] *As for the old weather-beaten she-dragon who guards you—*Who can he mean by that?

Mrs. Mal. Me, sir—me! he means me!—There—what do you think now?—but go on a little further.

Abs. Impudent scoundrel!—[*Reads.*] *it shall go hard but I will elude her vigilance, as I am told that the same ridiculous vanity which makes her dress up her coarse fea-*

Act Third

tures and deck her dull chat with hard words which she don't understand—

Mrs. Mal. There, sir, an attack upon my language! What do you think of that?—an aspersion upon my parts of speech! was ever such a brute! Sure, if I reprehend anything in this world, it is the use of my oracular tongue, and a nice derangement of epitaphs!

Abs. He deserves to be hanged and quartered! let me see— [*Reads.*] *same ridiculous vanity—*

Mrs. Mal. You need not read it again, sir.

Abs. I beg pardon, ma'am.—[*Reads.*] *does also lay her open to the grossest deceptions from flattery and pretended admiration—an impudent coxcomb!—so that I have a scheme to see you shortly with the old harridan's consent, and even to make her a go-between in our interview.—Was ever such assurance!*

Mrs. Mal. Did you ever hear anything like it?—he'll elude my vigilance, will he?—yes, yes! ha! ha! he's very likely to enter these doors;—we'll try who can plot best!

Abs. So we will, ma'am—so we will! Ha! ha! ha! a conceited puppy, ha! ha! ha!—Well, but Mrs. Malaprop, as the girl seems so infatuated by this fellow, suppose you were to wink at her corresponding with him for a little time—let her even plot an elopement with him—then do you connive at her escape—while I, just in the nick, will have the fellow laid by the heels, and fairly contrive to carry her off in his stead.

Mrs. Mal. I am delighted with the scheme; never was anything better perpetrated!

The Rivals

Abs. But, pray, could not I see the lady for a few minutes now?—I should like to try her temper a little.

Mrs. Mal. Why, I don't know—I doubt she is not prepared for a visit of this kind. There is a decorum in these matters.

Abs. O Lord! she won't mind me—only tell her Beverley—

Mrs. Mal. Sir!

Abs. Gently, good tongue. [*Aside*]

Mrs. Mal. What did you say of Beverley?

Abs. Oh, I was going to propose that you should tell her, by way of jest, that it was Beverley who was below; she'd come down fast enough then—ha! ha! ha!

Mrs. Mal. 'Twould be a trick she well deserves; besides, you know the fellow tells her he'll get my consent to see her—ha! ha! Let him if he can, I say again. Lydia, come down here! [*Calling.*] He'll make me a go-between in their interviews! ha! ha! ha! Come down, I say, Lydia! I don't wonder at your laughing, ha! ha! ha! his impudence is truly ridiculous.

Abs. 'Tis very ridiculous, upon my soul, ma'am, ha! ha! ha!

Mrs. Mal. The little hussy won't hear. Well, I'll go and tell her at once who it is—she shall know that Captain Absolute is come to wait on her. And I'll make her behave as becomes a young woman.

Abs. As you please, ma'am.

Mrs. Mal. For the present, captain, your servant. Ah! you've not done laughing yet, I see—elude my vigilance; yes, yes; ha! ha! ha! [*Exit*]

Act Third

Abs. Ha! ha! ha! one would think now that I might throw off all disguise at once, and seize my prize with security; but such is Lydia's caprice, that to undeceive were probably to lose her. I'll see whether she knows me.

[Walks aside, and seems engaged in looking at the pictures]

Enter LYDIA

Lyd. What a scene am I now to go through! surely nothing can be more dreadful than to be obliged to listen to the loathsome addresses of a stranger to one's heart. I have heard of girls persecuted as I am who have appealed in behalf of their favoured lover to the generosity of his rival; suppose I were to try it—there stands the hated rival—an officer too!—but oh, how unlike my Beverley! I wonder he don't begin—truly he seems a very negligent wooer!—quite at his ease, upon my word!—I'll speak first—Mr. Absolute.

Abs. Ma'am.

[Turns round]

Lyd. O heavens! Beverley!

Abs. Hush!—hush, my life! softly! be not surprised!

Lyd. I am so astonished! and so terrified! and so overjoyed! for Heaven's sake! how came you here?

Abs. Briefly, I have deceived your aunt—I was informed that my new rival was to visit here this evening, and, contriving to have him kept away, have passed myself on her for Captain Absolute.

Lyd. Oh, charming! And she really takes you for young Absolute?

Abs. Oh, she's convinced of it.

The Rivals

Lyd. Ha! ha! ha! I can't forbear laughing to think how her sagacity is overreached!

Abs. But we trifle with our precious moments—such another opportunity may not occur; then let me now conjure my kind, my condescending angel, to fix the time when I may rescue her from undeserving persecution, and with a licensed warmth plead for my reward.

Lyd. Will you, then, Beverley, consent to forfeit that portion of my paltry wealth? that burden on the wings of love?

Abs. Oh, come to me—rich only thus—in loveliness! Bring no portion to me but thy love—'t will be generous in you, Lydia—for well you know, it is the only dower your poor Beverley can repay.

Lyd. How persuasive are his words!—how charming will poverty be with him! [*Aside*]

Abs. Ah! my soul, what a life will we then live! love shall be our idol and support! we will worship him with a monastic strictness; abjuring all worldly toys, to centre every thought and action there, Proud of calamity, we will enjoy the wreck of wealth; while the surrounding gloom of adversity shall make the flame of our pure love show doubly bright. By heavens! I would fling all goods of fortune from me with a prodigal hand, to enjoy the scene where I might clasp my Lydia to my bosom, and say, the world affords no smile to me but here.—[*Embracing her.*] If she holds out now, the devil is in it! [*Aside*]

Lyd. Now could I fly with him to the antipodes! but my persecution is not yet come to a crisis. [*Aside*]

A&t Third

Reënter Mrs. MALAPROP, listening

Mrs. Mal. I am impatient to know how the little hussy deports herself. [*Aside*]

Abs. Sopenhive, Lydia!—is then your warmth abated?

Mrs. Mal. Warmth abated!—so!—she has been in a passion, I suppose. [*Aside*]

Lyd. No—nor ever can while I have life.

Mrs. Mal. An ill-tempered little devil! she'll be in a passion all her life—will she? [*Aside*]

Lyd. Think not the idle threats of my ridiculous aunt can ever have any weight with me.

Mrs. Mal. Very dutiful, upon my word! [*Aside*]

Lyd. Let her choice be Captain Absolute, but Beverley is mine.

Mrs. Mal. I am astonished at her assurance!—to his face—this is to his face! [*Aside*]

Abs. Thus then let me enforce my suit. [*Kneeling*]

Mrs. Mal. [*Aside.*] Ay, poor young man!—down on his knees entreating for pity!—I can contain no longer.—
[*Coming forward.*] Why, thou vixen! I have overheard you.

Abs. Oh, confound her vigilance! [*Aside*]

Mrs. Mal. Captain Absolute, I know not how to apologize for her shocking rudeness.

Abs. [*Aside.*] So—all's safe, I find.—[*Aloud.*] I have hopes, madam, that time will bring the young lady—

Mrs. Mal. Oh, there's nothing to be hoped for from her! she's as headstrong as an allegory on the banks of the Nile.

The Rivals

Lyd. Nay, madam, what do you charge me with now?

Mrs. Mal. Why, thou unblushing rebel—didn't you tell this gentleman to his face that you loved another better?—didn't you say you never would be his?

Lyd. No, madam—I did not.

Mrs. Mal. Good heavens! what assurance!—Lydia, Lydia, you ought to know that lying don't become a young woman!—Didn't you boast that Beverley, that stroller Beverley, possessed your heart?—Tell me that, I say.

Lyd. 'Tis true, ma'am, and none but Beverley—

Mrs. Mal. Hold! hold, Assurance!—you shall not be so rude.

Abs. Nay, pray, Mrs. Malaprop, don't stop the young lady's speech:—she's very welcome to talk thus—it does not hurt *me* in the least, I assure you.

Mrs. Mal. You are *too* good, captain—*too* amiably patient—but come with me, miss.—Let us see you again soon, captain—remember what we have fixed.

Abs. I shall, ma'am.

Mrs. Mal. Come, take a graceful leave of the gentleman.

Lyd. May every blessing wait on my Beverley, my loved Bev—

Mrs. Mal. Hussy! I'll choke the word in your throat!—come along—come along.

[*Exeunt severally, Captain ABSOLUTE kissing his hand to LYDIA—Mrs. MALAPROP stopping her from speaking*

Act Third

SCENE IV : ACRES's Lodgings

ACRES, *as just dressed, and* DAVID

Acres. Indeed, David—do you think I become it so?

Dav. You are quite another creature, believe me, master, by the mass! an' we've any luck we shall see the Devon monkerony in all the print-shops in Bath!

Acres. Dress *does* make a difference, David.

Dav. 'T is all in all, I think.—Difference! why, an' you were to go now to Clod-Hall, I am certain the old lady would n't know you: Master Butler would n't believe his own eyes, and Mrs. Pickle would cry, 'Lard presarve me!' our dairy-maid would come giggling to the door, and I warrant Dolly Tester, your honour's favourite, would blush like my waistcoat.—Oons! I'll hold a gallon, there an't a dog in the house but would bark, and I question whether Phillis would wag a hair of her tail!

Acres. Ay, David, there's nothing like polishing.

Dav. So I says of your honour's boots; but the boy never heeds me!

Acres. But, David, has Mr. De-la-grace been here? I must rub up my balancing, and chasing, and boring.

Dav. I'll call again, sir.

Acres. Do—and see if there are any letters for me at the post-office.

Dav. I will.—By the mass, I can't help looking at your head!—if I had n't been by at the cooking, I wish I may die if I should have known the dish again myself!

[*Exit*

The Rivals

Acres. [*Comes forward, practising a dancing step.*] Sink, slide—coupee.—Confound the first inventors of cotillions! say I—they are as bad as algebra to us country gentlemen—I can walk a minuet easy enough when I am forced!—and I have been accounted a good stick in a country-dance.—Odds jigs and tabours! I never valued your cross-over to couple—figure in—right and left—and I'd foot it with e'er a captain in the country!—but these outlandish heathen allemandes and cotillons are quite beyond me!—I shall never prosper at 'em, that's sure—mine are true-born English legs—they don't understand their curst French lingo!—their *pas* this, and *pas* that, and *pas* t'other—damn me! my feet don't like to be called paws! no 't is certain I have most Antigallican toes!

Enter SERVANT

Serv. Here is Sir Lucius O'Trigger to wait on you, sir.

Acres. Show him in!

[*Exit SERVANT*]

Enter Sir LUCIUS O'TRIGGER

Sir Luc. Mr. Acres, I am delighted to embrace you.

Acres. My dear Sir Lucius, I kiss your hands.

Sir Luc. Pray, my friend, what has brought you so suddenly to Bath?

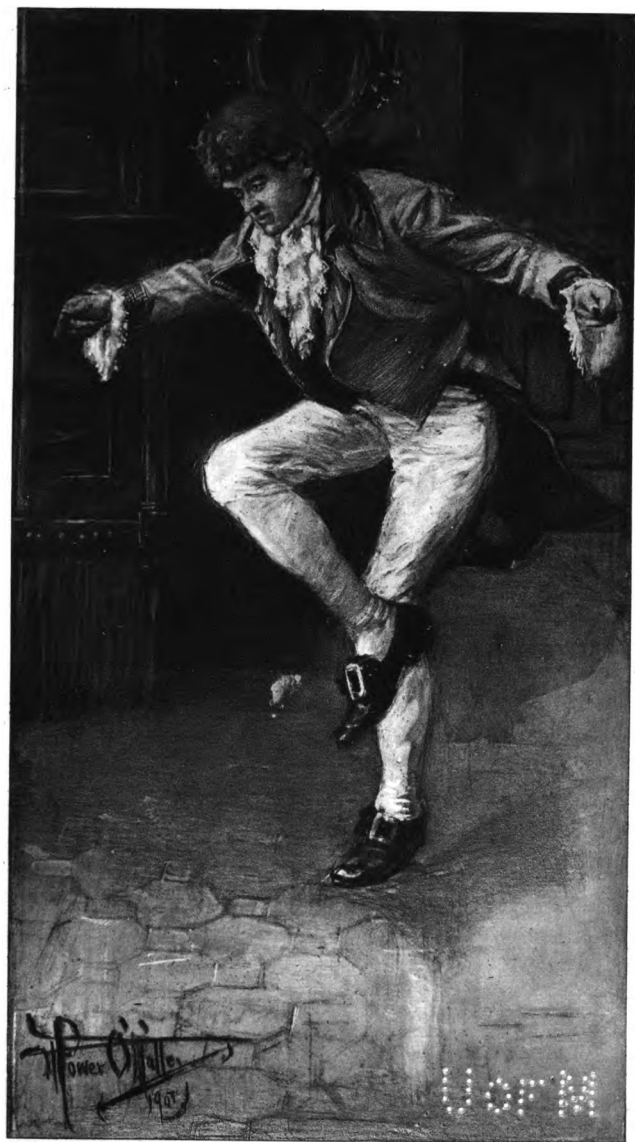
Acres. Faith! I have followed Cupid's Jack-a-lantern, and find myself in a quagmire at last.—In short, I have been very ill used, Sir Lucius.—I don't choose to mention names, but look on me as on a very ill-used gentleman.

Sir Luc. Pray what is the case? I ask no names.



“ Mine are true-born English legs ”

“Mind was seven-down English legs,”



1850

Act Third

Acres. Mark me, Sir Lucius, I fall as deep as need be in love with a young lady—her friends take my part—I follow her to Bath—send word of my arrival; and receive answer, that the lady is to be otherwise disposed of.—This, Sir Lucius, I call being ill used.

Sir Luc. Very ill, upon my conscience.—Pray, can you divine the cause of it?

Acres. Why, there's the matter; she has another lover, one Beverley, who, I am told, is now in Bath.—Odds slanders and lies! he must be at the bottom of it.

Sir Luc. A rival in the case, is there?—and you think he has supplanted you unfairly?

Acres. Unfairly! to be sure he has. He never could have done it fairly.

Sir Luc. Then sure you know what is to be done!

Acres. Not I, upon my soul!

Sir Luc. We wear no swords here, but you understand me.

Acres. What! fight him!

Sir Luc. Ay, to be sure: what can I mean else?

Acres. But he has given me no provocation.

Sir Luc. Now, I think he has given you the greatest provocation in the world. Can a man commit a more heinous offence against another than to fall in love with the same woman? Oh, by 'my soul! it is the most unpardonable breach of friendship.

Acres. Breach of friendship! Ay, ay; but I have no acquaintance with this man. I never saw him in my life.

Sir Luc. That's no argument at all—he has the less right then to take such a liberty.

The Rivals

Acres. Gad, that's true—I grow full of anger, Sir Lucius! I fire apace! Odds hilts and blades! I find a man may have a deal of valour in him, and not know it! But couldn't I contrive to have a little right of my side?

Sir Luc. What the devil signifies *right*, when your *honour* is concerned? Do you think Achilles or my little Alexander the Great ever inquired where the right lay? No, by my soul, they drew their broadswords, and left the lazy sons of peace to settle the justice of it.

Acres. Your words are a grenadier's march to my heart; I believe courage must be catching! I certainly do feel a kind of valour rising as it were—a kind of courage, as I may say.—Odds flints, pans, and triggers! I'll challenge him directly.

Sir Luc. Ah, my little friend! if I had Blunderbuss-Hall here, I could show you a range of ancestry, in the O'Trigger line, that would furnish the new room; every one of whom had killed his man!—For though the mansion-house and dirty acres have slipped through my fingers, I thank Heaven our honour and the family pictures are as fresh as ever.

Acres. O Sir Lucius! I have had ancestors too!—every man of 'em colonel or captain in the militia!—Odds balls and barrels!—say no more—I'm braced for it. The thunder of your words has soured the milk of human kindness in my breast;—Zounds! as the man in the play says, '*I could do such deeds!*'—

Sir Luc. Come, come, there must be no passion at all in the case—these things should always be done civilly.

Acres. I must be in a passion, Sir Lucius—I must be

Act Third

in a rage.—Dear Sir Lucius, let me be in a rage, if you love me. Come, here's pen and paper.—[*Sits down to write.*] I would the ink were red!—Indite, I say indite!—How shall I begin? Odds bullets and blades! I'll write a good bold hand, however.

Sir Luc. Pray compose yourself.

Acres. Come—now, shall I begin with an oath? Do, Sir Lucius, let me begin with a damme.

Sir Luc. Pho! pho! do the thing decently, and like a Christian. Begin now—*Sir*—

Acres. That's too civil by half.

Sir Luc. To prevent the confusion that might arise—

Acres. Well—

Sir Luc. From our both addressing the same lady—

Acres. Ay, there's the reason—same lady—well—

Sir Luc. I shall expect the honour of your company—

Acres. Zounds! I'm not asking him to dinner.

Sir Luc. Pray be easy.

Acres. Well then, honour of your company—

Sir Luc. To settle our pretensions—

Acres. Well.

Sir Luc. Let me see; ay King's-Mead-Fields will do—in King's-Mead-Fields.

Acres. So, that's done—Well, I'll fold it up presently; my own crest—a hand and dagger shall be the seal.

Sir Luc. You see now this little explanation will put a stop at once to all confusion or misunderstanding that might arise between you.

Acres. Ay, we fight to prevent any misunderstanding.

The Rivals

Sir Luc. Now, I'll leave you to fix your own time.—Take my advice, and you'll decide it this evening if you can; then let the worst come of it, 't will be off your mind to-morrow.

Acres. Very true.

Sir Luc. So I shall see nothing more of you, unless it be by letter, till the evening.—I would do myself the honour to carry your message; but, to tell you a secret, I believe I shall have just such another affair on my own hands. There is a gay captain here, who put a jest on me lately at the expense of my country, and I only want to fall in with the gentleman to call him out.

Acres. By my valour, I should like to see you fight first! Odds life! I should like to see you kill him if it was only to get a little lesson.

Sir Luc. I shall be very proud of instructing you.—Well for the present—but remember now, when you meet your antagonist, do everything in a mild and agreeable manner.—Let your courage be as keen, but at the same time as polished, as your sword. [*Exeunt severally*]



"I shall expect the honour of your company"

1870

1871

1872

1873

1874

1875

1876

1877

1878

1879

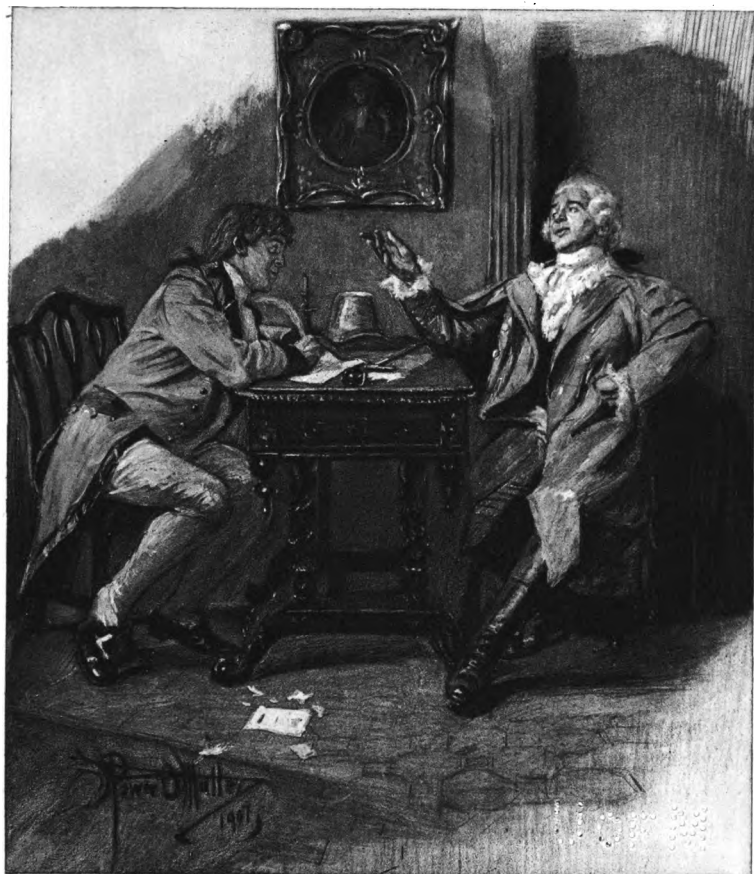
1880

1881

1882

1883

"I shall expect the honour of your company."



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Act IV

SCENE I: ACRES's Lodgings

ACRES and DAVID

DAVID. THEN, by the mass, sir! I would do no such thing—ne'er a Sir Lucius O'Trigger in the kingdom should make me fight, when I wa'n't so minded. Oons! what will the old lady say when she hears o't?

ACRES. Ah! David, if you had heard Sir Lucius!—Odds sparks and flames! he would have roused your valour.

DAVID. Not he, indeed. I hates such bloodthirsty cormorants. Look'ee, master, if you'd wanted a bout at boxing, quarter-staff, or short-staff, I should never be the man to bid you cry off: but for your curst sharps and snaps, I never knew any good come of 'em.

ACRES. But my honour, David, my honour! I must be very careful of my honour.

DAVID. Ay, by the mass! and I would be very careful of it; and I think in return my *honour* could n't do less then be very careful of *me*.

ACRES. Odds blades! David, no gentleman will ever risk the loss of his honour!

DAVID. I say then, it would be but civil in *honour* never to risk the loss of a *gentleman*.—Look'ee, master, this *honour* seems to me to be a marvellous false friend: ay, truly, a very courtier-like servant.—Put the case, I was a gentleman (which, thank God, no one can say of me); well—my honour makes me quarrel with another gen-

The Rivals

tleman of my acquaintance.—So—we fight. (Pleasant enough that!) Boh!—I kill him—(the more's my luck). Now, pray who gets the profit of it?—Why, my *honour*. But put the case that he kills me!—by the mass! I go to the worms, and my honour whips over to my enemy.

Acres. No, David—in that case!—Odds crowns and laurels! your honour follows you to the grave.

Dav. Now that's just the place where I could make a shift to do without it.

Acres. Zounds! David, you are a coward!—It does n't become my valour to listen to you.—What, shall I disgrace my ancestors?—Think of that, David—think what it would be to disgrace my ancestors!

Dav. Under favour, the surest way of not disgracing them is to keep as long as you can out of their company. Look'ee now, master, to go to them in such haste—with an ounce of lead in your brains—I should think might as well be let alone. Our ancestors are very good kind of folks; but they are the last people I should choose to have a visiting acquaintance with.

Acres. But, David, now, you don't think there is such very, very, *very* great danger, hey?—Odds life! people often fight without any mischief done!

Dav. By the mass, I think 't is ten to one against you!—Oons! here to meet some lion-headed fellow, I warrant, with his damned double-barrelled swords, and cut-and-thrust pistols!—Lord bless us! it makes me tremble to think o't!—Those be such desperate bloody-minded weapons! Well, I never could abide 'em—from a child I never could fancy 'em!—I suppose there an't



*“Our ancestors are the last people I should choose to
have a visiting acquaintance with”*



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Act Fourth

been so merciless a beast in the world as your loaded pistol!

Acrs. Zounds! I *won't* be afraid! Odds fire and fury! you shan't make me afraid. — Here is the challenge, and I have sent for my dear friend Jack Absolute to carry it for me.

Dav. Ay, i' the name of mischief, let *him* be the messenger. — For my part, I would n't lend a hand to it for the best horse in your stable. By the mass! it don't look like another letter! It is, as I may say, a designing and malicious-looking letter; — and I warrant smells of gun-powder like a soldier's pouch! — Oons! I would n't swear it may n't go off!

Acrs. Out, you poltroon! you ha'n't the valour of a grasshopper.

Dav. Well, I say no more — 't will be sad news, to be sure, at Clod-Hall! but I ha' done. — How Phillis will howl when she hears of it! — Ay, poor bitch, she little thinks what shooting her master's going after! — And I warrant old Crop, who has carried your honour, field and road, these ten years, will curse the hour he was born.

[*Whimpering*

Acrs. It won't do, David — I am determined to fight — so get along, you coward, while I'm in the mind.

Enter SERVANT

Serv. Captain Absolute, sir.

Acrs. Oh! show him up. [Exit SERVANT]

Dav. Well, Heaven send we be all alive this time to-morrow.

The Rivals

Acres. What's that?—Don't provoke me, David!

Dav. Good-by, master. [*Whimpering*]

Acres. Get along, you cowardly, dastardly, croaking raven!
[*Exit* DAVID]

Enter Captain ABSOLUTE

Abs. What's the matter, Bob?

Acres. A vile, sheep-hearted blockhead!—If I had n't the valour of St. George and the dragon to boot—

Abs. But what did you want with me, Bob?

Acres. Oh!—there— [*Gives him the challenge*]

Abs. [*Aside.*] *To Ensign Beverley.*—So, what's going on now?—[*Aloud.*] Well, what's this?

Acres. A challenge!

Abs. Indeed! Why, you won't fight him; will you, Bob?

Acres. Egad, but I will, Jack. Sir Lucius has wrought me to it. He has left me full of rage—and I'll fight this evening, that so much good passion mayn't be wasted.

Abs. But what have I to do with this?

Acres. Why, as I think you know something of this fellow, I want you to find him out for me, and give him this mortal defiance.

Abs. Well, give it to me, and trust me he gets it.

Acres. Thank you, my dear friend, my dear Jack; but it is giving you a great deal of trouble.

Abs. Not in the least—I beg you won't mention it.—No trouble in the world, I assure you.

Acres. You are very kind.—What it is to have a

Act Fourth

friend! — You could n't be my second, could you, Jack?

Abs. Why, no, Bob — not in *this* affair — it would not be quite so proper.

Acres. Well, then, I must get my friend Sir Lucius. I shall have your good wishes, however, Jack?

Abs. Whenever he meets you, believe me.

Reënter SERVANT

Serv. Sir Anthony Absolute is below, inquiring for the captain.

Abs. I'll come instantly. — [*Exit SERVANT.*] Well, my little hero, success attend you. [*Going*

Acres. Stay — stay, Jack. — If Beverley should ask you what kind of a man your friend Acres is, do tell him I am a devil of a fellow — will you, Jack?

Abs. To be sure I shall. I'll say you are a determined dog — hey, Bob!

Acres. Ay, do, do — and if that frightens him, egad, perhaps he mayn't come. So tell him I generally kill a man a week; will you, Jack?

Abs. I will, I will; I'll say you are called in the country *Fighting Bob*.

Acres. Right — right — 't is all to prevent mischief; for I don't want to take his life if I clear my honour.

Abs. No! that's very kind of you.

Acres. Why, you don't wish me to kill him — do you, Jack?

Abs. No, upon my soul, I do not. — But a devil of a fellow, hey? [*Going*

Acres. True, true — but stay — stay, Jack — you may

The Rivals

add that you never saw me in such a rage before—a most devouring rage!

Abs. I will, I will.

Acres. Remember, Jack—a determined dog!

Abs. Ay, ay, *Fighting Bob!* [*Exeunt severally*]

SCENE II: *Mrs. MALAPROP's Lodgings*

Mrs. MALAPROP and LYDIA

Mrs. Mal. Why, thou perverse one!—tell me what you can object to him? Is n't he a handsome man?—tell me that. A genteel man? a pretty figure of a man?

Lyd. [*Aside.*] She little thinks whom she is praising! —[*Aloud.*] So is Beverley, ma'am.

Mrs. Mal. No caparisons, miss, if you please. Caparisons don't become a young woman. No! Captain Absolute is indeed a fine gentleman!

Lyd. Ay, the Captain Absolute *you* have seen. [*Aside*]

Mrs. Mal. Then he's so well bred;—*so* full of alacrity, and adulation! and has *so much* to say for himself:—in such good language too!—His physiognomy so grammatical!—then his presence is so noble!—I protest, when I saw him, I thought of what Hamlet says in the play:—"Hesperian curls—the front of Job himself!—an eye, like March, to threaten at command!—A station, like Harry Mercury, new—" Something about kissing—on a hill—however, the similitude struck me directly.

Act Fourth

Lyd. How enraged she'll be presently, when she discovers her mistake! [*Aside*]

Enter SERVANT

Serv. Sir Anthony and Captain Absolute are below, ma'am.

Mrs. Mal. Show them up here.—[*Exit SERVANT.*] Now, Lydia, I insist on your behaving as becomes a young woman. Show your good breeding, at least, though you have forgot your duty.

Lyd. Madam, I have told you my resolution!—I shall not only give him no encouragement, but I won't even speak to or look at him.

[*Flings herself into a chair, with her face from the door*]

*Enter Sir ANTHONY ABSOLUTE and Captain
ABSOLUTE*

Sir Anth. Here we are, Mrs. Malaprop; come to mitigate the frowns of unrelenting beauty,—and difficulty enough I had to bring this fellow.—I don't know what's the matter; but if I had not held him by force, he'd have given me the slip.

Mrs. Mal. You have infinite trouble, Sir Anthony, in the affair. I am ashamed for the cause!—[*Aside to LYDIA.*] Lydia, Lydia, rise, I beseech you!—pay your respects!

Sir Anth. I hope, madam, that Miss Languish has reflected on the worth of this gentleman, and the regard due to her aunt's choice and my alliance.—[*Aside to Captain ABSOLUTE.*] Now, Jack, speak to her.

Abs. [*Aside.*] What the devil shall I do!—[*Aside to Sir ANTHONY.*] You see, sir, she won't even look at

The Rivals

me whilst you are here. — I knew she would n't! — I told you so. — Let me entreat you, sir, to leave us together!

[*Seems to expostulate with his father*

Lyd. [*Aside.*] I wonder I ha'n't heard my aunt exclaim yet! sure she can't have looked at him! — perhaps their regimentals are alike, and she is something blind.

Sir Anth. I say, sir, I won't stir a foot yet!

Mrs. Mal. I am sorry to say, Sir Anthony, that my affluence over my niece is very small. — [*Aside to LYDIA.*] Turn round, Lydia: I blush for you!

Sir Anth. May I not flatter myself that Miss Languish will assign what cause of dislike she can have to my son! — [*Aside to Captain ABSOLUTE.*] Why don't you begin, Jack? — Speak, you puppy — speak.

Mrs. Mal. It is impossible, Sir Anthony, she can have any. She will not say she has. — [*Aside to LYDIA.*] Answer, hussy! why don't you answer?

Sir Anth. Then, madam, I trust that a childish and hasty predilection will be no bar to Jack's happiness. — [*Aside to Captain ABSOLUTE.*] — Zounds! sirrah! why don't you speak!

Lyd. [*Aside.*] I think my lover seems as little inclined to conversation as myself. — How strangely blind my aunt must be!

Abs. Hem! hem! madam — hem! — [*Attempts to speak, then returns to Sir ANTHONY.*] Faith! sir, I am so confounded! — and — so — so — confused! — I told you I should be so, sir — I knew it. — The — the — tremor of my passion entirely takes away my presence of mind.

Sir Anth. But it don't take away your voice, fool,

Act Fourth

does it?—Go up, and speak to her directly!

[*Captain ABSOLUTE makes signs to Mrs. MALAPROP to leave them together*

Mrs. Mal. Sir Anthony, shall we leave them together?—[*Aside to LYDIA.*] Ah! you stubborn little vixen!

Sir Anth. Not yet, ma'am, not yet!—[*Aside to Captain ABSOLUTE.*] What the devil are you at? unlock your jaws, sirrah, or—

Abs. [*Aside.*] Now Heaven send she may be too sul-
len to look round!—I must disguise my voice.—
[*Draws near LYDIA, and speaks in a low hoarse tone.*] Will not Miss Languish lend an ear to the mild accents of true love? Will not—

Sir Anth. What the devil ails the fellow? Why don't you speak out?—not stand croaking like a frog in a quinsy!

Abs. The—the—excess of my awe, and my—my—my modesty, quite choke me!

Sir Anth. Ah! your modesty again!—I'll tell you what, Jack; if you don't speak out directly, and glibly too, I shall be in such a rage!—Mrs. Malaprop, I wish the lady would favour us with something more than a side-front. [*Mrs. MALAPROP seems to chide LYDIA*

Abs. [*Aside.*] So all will out, I see!—[*Goes up to LYDIA, speaks softly.*] Be not surprised, my Lydia, suppress all surprise at present.

Lyd. [*Aside.*] Heavens! 'tis Beverley's voice! Sure he can't have imposed on Sir Anthony too!—[*Looks round by degrees, then starts up.*] Is this possible!—my Bever-

The Rivals

ley!—how can this be?—my Beverley?

Abs. Ah! 't is all over.

[*Aside*

Sir Anth. Beverley!—the devil—Beverley!—What can the girl mean?—This is my son, Jack Absolute.

Mrs. Mal. For shame, hussy! for shame! your head runs so on that fellow, that you have him always in your eyes!—beg Captain Absolute's pardon directly.

Lyd. I see no Captain Absolute, but my loved Beverley!

Sir Anth. Zounds! the girl's mad!—her brain's turned by reading.

Mrs. Mal. O' my conscience, I believe so!—What do you mean by Beverley, hussy?—You saw Captain Absolute before to-day; there he is—your husband that shall be.

Lyd. With all my soul, ma'am—when I refuse my Beverley—

Sir Anth. Oh! she's as mad as Bedlam!—or has this fellow been playing us a rogue's trick!—Come here, sirrah; who the devil are you?

Abs. Faith, sir, I am not quite clear myself; but I'll endeavour to recollect.

Sir Anth. Are you my son or not?—answer for your mother, you dog, if you won't for me.

Mrs. Mal. Ay, sir, who are you? Oh, mercy! I begin to suspect!—

Abs. [*Aside.*] Ye powers of Impudence, befriend me! —[*Aloud.*] Sir Anthony, most assuredly I am your wife's son; and that I sincerely believe myself to be yours also,

Act Fourth

I hope my duty has always shown.—Mrs. Malaprop, I am your most respectful admirer, and shall be proud to add affectionate nephew.—I need not tell my Lydia that she sees her faithful Beverley, who, knowing the singular generosity of her temper, assumed that name and station, which has proved a test of the most disinterested love, which he now hopes to enjoy in a more elevated character.

Lyd. So!—there will be no elopement after all!

[*Sullenly*]

Sir Anth. Upon my soul, Jack, thou art a very impudent fellow! to do you justice, I think I never saw a piece of more consummate assurance!

Abs. Oh, you flatter me, sir—you compliment—'tis my *modesty*, you know, sir—my *modesty*, that has stood in my way.

Sir Anth. Well, I am glad you are not the dull, insensible varlet you pretended to be, however!—I'm glad you have made a fool of your father, you dog—I am.—So this was your *penitence*, your *duty* and *obedience*!—I thought it was damned sudden!—*You never heard their names before*, not you!—*what, the Languishes of Worcestershire*, hey?—*if you could please me in the affair it was all you desired*!—Ah! you dissembling villain!—What!—[*Pointing to LYDIA.*] *she squints, don't she?*—*a little red-haired girl*!—hey?—Why, you hypocritical young rascal!—I wonder you an't ashamed to hold up your head!

Abs. 'Tis with difficulty, sir.—I *am* confused—very much confused, as you must perceive.

The Rivals

Mrs. Mal. O Lud! Sir Anthony!—a new light breaks in upon me!—hey!—how! what! captain, did *you* write the letters then?—What—am I to thank *you* for the elegant compilation of an old weather-beaten she-dragon—hey!—Oh, mercy!—was it *you* that reflected on my parts of speech?

Abs. Dear sir! my modesty will be overpowered at last, if you don't assist me—I shall certainly not be able to stand it!

Sir Anth. Come, come, Mrs. Malaprop, we must forget and forgive;— odds life! matters have taken so clever a turn all of a sudden, that I could find in my heart to be so good-humoured! and so gallant! hey! Mrs. Malaprop!

Mrs. Mal. Well, Sir Anthony, since *you* desire it, we will not anticipate the past!— so mind, young people—our retrospection will be all to the future.

Sir Anth. Come, we must leave them together; Mrs. Malaprop, they long to fly into each other's arms, I warrant!—Jack—isn't the cheek as I said, hey?—and the eye, you rogue!—and the lip—hey? Come, Mrs. Malaprop, we'll not disturb their tenderness—theirs is the time of life for happiness!—*Youth's the season made for joy*—[*Sings.*]—hey!—Odds life! I'm in such spirits,—I don't know what I could not do!—Permit me, ma'am—[*Gives his hand to Mrs. MALAPROP.*] [*Sings.*] Tol-de-rol—'gad, I should like to have a little fooling myself—Tol-de-rol! de-rol.

[*Exit, singing and handing Mrs. MALAPROP.*—
LYDIA sits sullenly in her chair

Act Fourth

Abs. [*Aside.*] So much thought bodes me no good.—
[*Aloud.*] So grave, Lydia!

Lyd. Sir!

Abs. [*Aside.*] So!—egad! I thought as much!—that damned monosyllable has froze me!—[*Aloud.*] What, Lydia, now that we are as happy in our friends' consent, as in our mutual vows—

Lyd. *Friends' consent* indeed! [*Peevishly*

Abs. Come, come, we must lay aside some of our romance—a little wealth and comfort may be endured after all. And for your fortune, the lawyers shall make such settlements as—

Lyd. *Lawyers!* I hate lawyers!

Abs. Nay, then, we will not wait for their lingering forms, but instantly procure the licence, and—

Lyd. The *licence!*—I hate licence!

Abs. Oh, my love! be not so unkind!—thus let me entreat— [*Kneeling*

Lyd. Psha!—what signifies kneeling, when you know I *must* have you?

Abs. [*Rising.*] Nay, madam, there shall be no constraint upon your inclinations, I promise you.—If I have lost your heart—I resign the rest—[*Aside.*] 'Gad, I must try what a little *spirit* will do.

Lyd. [*Rising.*] Then, sir, let me tell you, the interest you had there was acquired by a mean, unmanly imposition, and deserves the punishment of fraud.—What, you have been treating *me* like a child!—humouring my romance! and laughing, I suppose, at your success!

The Rivals

Abs. You wrong me, Lydia, you wrong me—only hear—

Lyd. So, while I fondly imagined we were deceiving my relations, and flattered myself that I should outwit and incense them all—behold my hopes are to be crushed at once, by my aunt's consent and approbation—and I am myself the only dupe at last!—[*Walking about in a heat.*] But here, sir, is the picture—Beverley's picture! [*taking a miniature from her bosom*] which I have worn, night and day, in spite of threats and entreaties!—There, sir, [*flings it to him*] and be assured I throw the original from my heart as easily.

Abs. Nay, nay, ma'am, we will not differ as to that.—Here, [*taking out a picture*] here is Miss Lydia Languish.—What a difference!—ay, *there* is the heavenly assenting smile that first gave soul and spirit to my hopes!—those are the lips which sealed a vow, as yet scarce dry in Cupid's calendar! and there the half-resentful blush, that *would* have checked the ardour of my thanks!—Well, all that's past!—all over indeed!—There, madam—in beauty, that copy is not equal to you, but in my mind its merit over the original, in being still the same, is such—that—I cannot find in my heart to part with it. [*Puts it up again*]

Lyd. [*Softening.*] 'Tis your own doing, sir—I—I—I suppose you are perfectly satisfied.

Abs. Oh, most certainly—sure, now, this is much better than being in love! ha! ha! ha!—there's some spirit in *this*!—What signifies breaking some scores of solemn promises:—all that's of no consequence, you



“ In beauty, that copy is not equal to you ! ”

"I hope at least that it goes into the ground"



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Act Fourth

know.—To be sure people will say that miss don't know her own mind—but never mind that! Or, perhaps, they may be ill-natured enough to hint that the gentleman grew tired of the lady and forsook her—but don't let that fret you.

Lyd. There is no bearing his insolence.

[*Bursts into tears*]

Reënter Mrs. MALAPROP and Sir ANTHONY

ABSOLUTE

Mrs. Mal. [*Entering.*] Come, we must interrupt your billing and cooing awhile.

Lyd. This is worse than your treachery and deceit, you base ingrate! [*Sobbing*]

Sir Anth. What the devil's the matter now!—Zounds! Mrs. Malaprop, this is the oddest *billing* and *cooing* I ever heard!—but what the deuce is the meaning of it?—I am quite astonished!

Abs. Ask the lady, sir.

Mrs. Mal. Oh, mercy!—I'm quite analyzed, for my part!—Why, Lydia, what is the reason of this?

Lyd. Ask the gentleman, ma'am.

Sir Anth. Zounds! I shall be in a frenzy!—Why, Jack, you are not come out to be any one else, are you?

Mrs. Mal. Ay, sir, there's no more trick, is there?—you are not like Cerberus, *three* gentlemen at once, are you?

Abs. You'll not let me speak—I say the lady can account for this much better than I can.

Lyd. Ma'am, you once commanded me never to think

The Rivals

of Beverley again—there is the man—I now obey you :
for, from this moment, I renounce him for ever.

[Exit LYDIA]

Mrs. Mal. Oh, mercy! and miracles! what a turn here is—why sure, captain, you have n't behaved disrespectfully to my niece?

Sir Anth. Ha! ha! ha!—ha! ha! ha!—now I see it. Ha! ha! ha!—now I see it—you have been too lively, Jack.

Abs. Nay, sir, upon my word—

Sir Anth. Come, no lying, Jack—I'm sure 'twas so.

Mrs. Mal. O Lud! Sir Anthony!—Oh, fy, captain!

Abs. Upon my soul, ma'am—

Sir Anth. Come, no excuses, Jack; why, your father, you rogue, was so before you:—the blood of the Absolutes was always impatient.—Ha! ha! ha! poor little Lydia! why, you've frightened her, you dog, you have.

Abs. By all that's good, sir—

Sir Anth. Zounds! say no more, I tell you—Mrs. Malaprop shall make your peace.—You must make his peace, Mrs. Malaprop:—you must tell her 'tis Jack's way—tell her 'tis all our ways—it runs in the blood of our family!—Come away, Jack—Ha! ha! ha! Mrs. Malaprop—a young villain! [Pushes him out]

Mrs. Mal. Oh! Sir Anthony!—Oh, fy, captain!

[Exeunt severally]

Act Fourth

SCENE III: *The North Parade*

Enter Sir LUCIUS O'TRIGGER

Sir Luc. I wonder where this Captain Absolute hides himself! Upon my conscience! these officers are always in one's way in love affairs:—I remember I might have married Lady Dorothy Carmine, if it had not been for a little rogue of a major, who ran away with her before she could get a sight of me! And I wonder too what it is the ladies can see in them to be so fond of them—unless it be a touch of the old serpent in 'em, that makes the little creatures be caught, like vipers, with a bit of red cloth. Ha! isn't this the captain coming?—faith it is!—There is a probability of succeeding about that fellow that is mighty provoking! Who the devil is he talking to? [*Steps aside*]

Enter Captain ABSOLUTE

Abs. [*Aside.*] To what fine purpose I have been plotting! a noble reward for all my schemes, upon my soul!—a little gypsy!—I did not think her romance could have made her so damned absurd either. 'Sdeath, I never was in a worse humour in my life!—I could cut my own throat, or any other person's, with the greatest pleasure in the world!

Sir Luc. Oh, faith! I'm in the luck of it. I never could have found him in a sweeter temper for my purpose—to be sure I'm just come in the nick! Now to enter into conversation with him, and so quarrel genteelly.—[*Goes up to Captain ABSOLUTE.*] With regard to that matter, captain, I must beg leave to differ in opinion with you.

The Rivals

Abs. Upon my word, then, you must be a very subtle disputant : — because, sir, I happened just then to be giving no opinion at all.

Sir Luc. That's no reason. For, give me leave to tell you, a man may think an untruth as well as speak one.

Abs. Very true, sir; but if a man never utters his thoughts, I should think they might stand a chance of escaping controversy.

Sir Luc. Then, sir, you differ in opinion with me, which amounts to the same thing.

Abs. Hark'ee, Sir Lucius; if I had not before known you to be a gentleman, upon my soul, I should not have discovered it at this interview: for what you can drive at, unless you mean to quarrel with me, I cannot conceive.

Sir Luc. I humbly thank you, sir, for the quickness of your apprehension.—[*Bowing.*] You have named the very thing I would be at.

Abs. Very well, sir; I shall certainly not balk your inclinations.—But I should be glad you would please to explain your motives.

Sir Luc. Pray, sir, be easy;—the quarrel is a very pretty quarrel as it stands;—we should only spoil it by trying to explain it.—However, your memory is very short, or you could not have forgot an affront you passed on me within this week.—So, no more, but name your time and place.

Abs. Well, sir, since you are so bent on it, the sooner the better; let it be this evening—here by the Spring Gardens.—We shall scarcely be interrupted.

Act Fourth

Sir Luc. Faith! that same interruption in affairs of this nature shows very great ill-breeding.—I don't know what's the reason, but in England, if a thing of this kind gets wind, people make such a pother, that a gentleman can never fight in peace and quietness. However, if it's the same to you, captain, I should take it as a particular kindness if you'd let us meet in King's-Mead-Fields, as a little business will call me there about six o'clock, and I may despatch both matters at once.

Abs. 'Tis the same to me exactly.—A little after six, then, we will discuss this matter more seriously.

Sir Luc. If you please, sir; there will be very pretty small-sword light, though it won't do for a long shot.—So that matter's settled, and my mind's at ease.

[*Exit*

Enter FAULKLAND, meeting ABSOLUTE

Abs. Well met! I was going to look for you.—O Faulkland! all the demons of spite and disappointment have conspired against me! I'm so vexed, that if I had not the prospect of a resource in being knocked o' the head by-and-by, I should scarce have spirits to tell you the cause.

Faulk. What can you mean?—Has Lydia changed her mind?—I should have thought her duty and inclination would now have pointed to the same object.

Abs. Ay, just as the eyes do of a person who squints: when her love-eye was fixed on me, t'other, her eye of duty, was finely obliqued: but when duty bid her point that the same way, off t'other turned on a swivel, and secured its retreat with a frown!

The Rivals

Faulk. But what's the resource you—

Abs. Oh, to wind up the whole, a good-natured Irishman here has—[*Mimicking Sir Lucius*—] begged leave to have the pleasure of cutting my throat: and I mean to indulge him—that's all.

Faulk. Prithee, be serious!

Abs. 'Tis fact, upon my soul! Sir Lucius O'Trigger—you know him by sight—for some affront, which I am sure I never intended, has obliged me to meet him this evening at six o'clock: 't is on that account I wished to see you;—you must go with me.

Faulk. Nay, there must be some mistake, sure. Sir Lucius shall explain himself, and I dare say matters may be accommodated. But this evening did you say? I wish it had been any other time.

Abs. Why? there will be light enough: there will (as Sir Lucius says) “be very pretty small-sword light, though it will not do for a long shot.” Confound his long shots!

Faulk. But I am myself a good deal ruffled by a difference I have had with Julia. My vile tormenting temper has made me treat her so cruelly, that I shall not be myself till we are reconciled.

Abs. By heavens! Faulkland, you don't deserve her!

Enter SERVANT, gives FAULKLAND a letter, and exit

Faulk. O Jack! this is from Julia. I dread to open it! I fear it may be to take a last leave!—perhaps to bid me return her letters, and restore—oh, how I suffer for my folly!

Act Fourth

Abs. Here, let me see.—[*Takes the letter and opens it.*] Ay, a final sentence, indeed!—'tis all over with you, faith!

Faulk. Nay, Jack, don't keep me in suspense!

Abs. Hear then.—[*Reads.*] *As I am convinced that my dear Faulkland's own reflections have already upbraided him for his last unkindness to me, I will not add a word on the subject. I wish to speak with you as soon as possible. Yours ever and truly,* JULIA. There's stubbornness and resentment for you!—[*Gives him the letter.*] Why, man, you don't seem one whit the happier at this!

Faulk. Oh, yes, I am: but—but—

Abs. Confound your *buts*! you never hear anything that would make another man bless himself, but you immediately damn it with a *but*!

Faulk. Now, Jack, as you are my friend, own honestly—don't you think there is something forward, something indelicate, in this haste to forgive? Women should never sue for reconciliation: that should always come from us. They should retain their coldness till wooed to kindness; and their pardon, like their love, should "not unsought be won."

Abs. I have not patience to listen to you! thou'rt incorrigible! so say no more on the subject. I must go to settle a few matters. Let me see you before six, remember, at my lodgings. A poor industrious devil like me, who have toiled, and drudged, and plotted to gain my ends, and am at last disappointed by other people's folly, may in pity be allowed to swear and grumble a little; but a captious sceptic in love, a slave to fretfulness and

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whim, who has no difficulties but of his own creating,
is a subject more fit for ridicule than compassion!

[*Exit*

Faulk. I feel his reproaches; yet I would not change this too exquisite nicety for the gross content with which *he* tramples on the thorns of love!—His engaging me in this duel has started an idea in my head, which I will instantly pursue. I'll use it as the touchstone of Julia's sincerity and disinterestedness. If her love prove pure and sterling ore, my name will rest on it with honour; and once I've stamped it there, I lay aside my doubts for ever! But if the dross of selfishness, the alloy of pride, predominate, 't will be best to leave her as a toy for some less cautious fool to sigh for!

[*Exit*

Act V

SCENE I: JULIA'S *Dressing-room*

JULIA discovered alone

JUL. How this message has alarmed me! what dreadful accident can he mean? why such charge to be alone?—O Faulkland!—how many unhappy moments—how many tears have you cost me.

Enter FAULKLAND

Jul. What means this?—why this caution, Faulkland?

Faulk. Alas! Julia, I am come to take a long farewell.

Jul. Heavens! what do you mean?

Faulk. You see before you a wretch whose life is forfeited. Nay, start not!—the infirmity of my temper has drawn all this misery on me. I left you fretful and passionate—an untoward accident drew me into a quarrel—the event is, that I must fly this kingdom instantly. O Julia, had I been so fortunate as to have called you mine entirely, before this mischance had fallen on me, I should not so deeply dread my banishment!

Jul. My soul is oppressed with sorrow at the nature of your misfortune: had these adverse circumstances arisen from a less fatal cause, I should have felt strong comfort in the thought that I could now chase from your bosom every doubt of the warm sincerity of my love. My heart has long known no other guardian—I now entrust my person to your honour—we will fly

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together. When safe from pursuit, my father's will may be fulfilled—and I receive a legal claim to be the partner of your sorrows and tenderest comforter. Then on the bosom of your wedded Julia, you may lull your keen regret to slumbering; while virtuous love, with a cherub's hand, shall smooth the brow of upbraiding thought, and pluck the thorn from compunction.

Faulk. O Julia! I am bankrupt in gratitude! but the time is so pressing, it calls on you for so hasty a resolution.—Would you not wish some hours to weigh the advantages you forego, and what little compensation poor Faulkland can make you beside his solitary love?

Jul. I ask not a moment. No, Faulkland, I have loved you for yourself: and if I now, more than ever, prize the solemn engagement which so long has pledged us to each other, it is because it leaves no room for hard aspersions on my fame, and puts the seal of duty to an act of love. But let us not linger. Perhaps this delay—

Faulk. 'T will be better I should not venture out again till dark. Yet am I grieved to think what numberless distresses will press heavy on your gentle disposition!

Jul. Perhaps your fortune may be forfeited by this unhappy act.—I know not whether 'tis so; but sure that alone can never make us unhappy. The little I have will be sufficient to support us; and exile never should be splendid.

Faulk. Ay, but in such an abject state of life, my wounded pride perhaps may increase the natural fretfulness of my temper, till I become a rude, morose companion, beyond your patience to endure. Perhaps the

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recollection of a deed my conscience cannot justify may haunt me in such gloomy and unsocial fits, that I shall hate the tenderness that would relieve me, break from your arms, and quarrel with your fondness!

Jul. If your thoughts should assume so unhappy a bent, you will the more want some mild and affectionate spirit to watch over and console you: one who, by bearing *your* infirmities with gentleness and resignation, may teach you *so* to bear the evils of your fortune.

Faulk. Julia, I have proved you to the quick! and with this useless device I throw away all my doubts. How shall I plead to be forgiven this last unworthy effect of my restless, unsatisfied disposition?

Jul. Has no such disaster happened as you related?

Faulk. I am ashamed to own that it was pretended; yet in pity, Julia, do not kill me with resenting a fault which never can be repeated: but sealing, this once, my pardon, let me to-morrow, in the face of Heaven, receive my future guide and monitress, and expiate my past folly by years of tender adoration.

Jul. Hold, Faulkland!—that you are free from a crime, which I before feared to name, Heaven knows how sincerely I rejoice! These are tears of thankfulness for that! But that your cruel doubts should have urged you to an imposition that has wrung my heart gives me now a pang more keen than I can express!

Faulk. By heavens! Julia—

Jul. Yet hear me.—My father loved you, Faulkland! and you preserved the life that tender parent gave me; in his presence I pledged my hand—joyfully pledged

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it—where before I had given my heart. When, soon after, I lost that parent, it seemed to me that Providence had, in Faulkland, shown me whither to transfer, without a pause, my grateful duty, as well as my affection: hence I have been content to bear from you what pride and delicacy would have forbid me from another. I will not upbraid you by repeating how you have trifled with my sincerity—

Faulk. I confess it all! yet hear—

Jul. After such a year of trial, I might have flattered myself that I should not have been insulted with a new probation of my sincerity, as cruel as unnecessary! I now see it is not in your nature to be content or confident in love. With this conviction—I never will be yours. While I had hopes that my persevering attention and unrepenting kindness might in time reform your temper, I should have been happy to have gained a dearer influence over you; but I will not furnish you with a licensed power to keep alive an incorrigible fault at the expense of one who never would contend with you.

Faulk. Nay, but, Julia, by my soul and honour, if after this—

Jul. But one word more.—As my faith has once been given to you, I never will barter it with another.—I shall pray for your happiness with the truest sincerity; and the dearest blessing I can ask of Heaven to send you will be to charm you from that unhappy temper which alone has prevented the performance of our solemn engagement.—All I request of *you* is, that

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you will yourself reflect upon this infirmity, and when you number up the many true delights it has deprived you of, let it not be your *least* regret, that it lost you the love of one—who would have followed you in beggary through the world! [Exit

Faulk. She's gone—for ever!—There was an awful resolution in her manner, that riveted me to my place.—O fool!—dolt!—barbarian! Cursed as I am, with more imperfections than my fellow wretches, kind fortune sent a heaven-gifted cherub to my aid, and, like a ruffian, I have driven her from my side!—I must now haste to my appointment. Well, my mind is tuned for such a scene. I shall wish only to become a principal in it, and reverse the tale my cursed folly put me upon forging here.—O Love!—tormentor!—fiend!—whose influence, like the moon's, acting on men of dull souls, makes idiots of them, but, meeting subtler spirits, betrays their course and urges sensibility to madness!

[Exit

Enter LYDIA and MAID

Maid. My mistress, ma'am, I know, was just here now—perhaps she is only in the next room. [Exit

Lyd. Heigh-ho! Though he has used me so, this fellow runs strangely in my head. I believe one lecture from my grave cousin will make me recall him.—[Re-enter JULIA.] O Julia, I am come to you with such an appetite for consolation.—Lud! child, what's the matter with you? You have been crying!—I'll be hanged if that Faulkland has not been tormenting you!

Jul. You mistake the cause of my uneasiness!—

The Rivals

Something *has* flurried me a little. Nothing that you can guess at.—[*Aside.*] I would not accuse Faulkland to a sister!

Lyd. Ah! whatever vexations you may have, I can assure you mine surpass them. You know who Beverley proves to be?

Ful. I will now own to you, Lydia, that Mr. Faulkland had before informed me of the whole affair. Had young Absolute been the person you took him for I should not have accepted your confidence on the subject, without a serious endeavour to counteract your caprice.

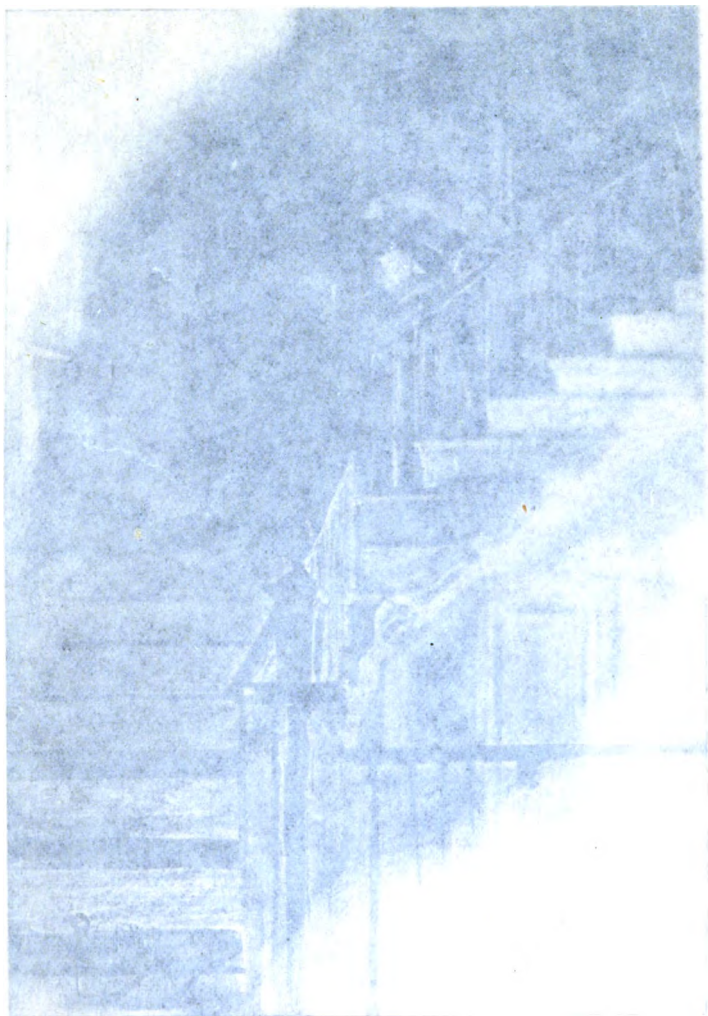
Lyd. So, then, I see I have been deceived by every one! But I don't care—I'll never have him.

Ful. Nay, Lydia—

Lyd. Why, is it not provoking? when I thought we were coming to the prettiest distress imaginable, to find myself made a mere Smithfield bargain of at last! There, had I projected one of the most sentimental elopements!—so becoming a disguise!—so amiable a ladder of ropes!—Conscious moon—four horses—Scotch parson—with such surprise to Mrs. Malaprop—and such paragraphs in the newspapers!—Oh, I shall die with disappointment.

Ful. I don't wonder at it!

Lyd. Now—sad reverse!—what have I to expect, but, after a deal of flimsy preparations with a bishop's licence, and my aunt's blessing, to go simpering up to the altar; or perhaps be cried three times in a country church, and have an unmannerly fat clerk ask the consent of every butcher in the parish to join John Abso-



*“How often have I stole forth, in the coldest night in
January”*



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lute and Lydia Languish, spinster! Oh that I should live to hear myself called Spinster!

Jul. Melancholy indeed!

Lyd. How mortifying, to remember the dear delicious shifts I used to be put to, to gain half a minute's conversation with this fellow!—How often have I stole forth, in the coldest night in January, and found him in the garden, stuck like a dripping statue! There would he kneel to me in the snow, and sneeze and cough so pathetically! he shivering with cold and I with apprehension! and while the freezing blast numbed our joints, how warmly would he press me to pity his flame, and glow with mutual ardour!—Ah, Julia, that was something like being in love.

Jul. If I were in spirits, Lydia, I should chide you only by laughing heartily at you; but it suits more the situation of my mind, at present, earnestly to entreat you not to let a man, who loves you with sincerity, suffer that unhappiness from your caprice, which I know too well caprice can inflict.

Lyd. O Lud! what has brought my aunt here?

Enter Mrs. MALAPROP, FAG, and DAVID

Mrs. Mal. So! so! here's fine work!—here's fine suicide, parricide, and simulation, going on in the fields! and Sir Anthony not to be found to prevent the anti-strophe!

Jul. For Heaven's sake, madam, what's the meaning of this?

Mrs. Mal. That gentleman can tell you—'t was he enveloped the affair to me.

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Lyd. Do, sir, will you, inform us? [To FAG]

Fag. Ma'am, I should hold myself very deficient in every requisite that forms the man of breeding, if I delayed a moment to give all the information in my power to a lady so deeply interested in the affair as you are.

Lyd. But quick! quick, sir!

Fag. True, ma'am, as you say, one should be quick in divulging matters of this nature; for should we be tedious, perhaps while we are flourishing on the subject, two or three lives may be lost!

Lyd. O patience!—Do, ma'am, for Heaven's sake tell us what is the matter?

Mrs. Mal. Why, murder's the matter! slaughter's the matter! killing's the matter!—but he can tell you the perpendiculars.

Lyd. Then, prithee, sir, be brief.

Fag. Why then, ma'am, as to murder—I cannot take upon me to say—and as to slaughter, or manslaughter, that will be as the jury finds it.

Lyd. But who, sir—who are engaged in this?

Fag. Faith, ma'am, one is a young gentleman whom I should be very sorry anything was to happen to—a very pretty behaved gentleman! We have lived much together, and always on terms.

Lyd. But who is this? who? who? who?

Fag. My master, ma'am—my master—I speak of my master.

Lyd. Heavens! What, Captain Absolute!

Mrs. Mal. Oh, to be sure, you are frightened now!

Act Fifth

Ful. But who are with him, sir?

Fag. As to the rest, ma'am, this gentleman can inform you better than I.

Ful. Do speak, friend.

[*To DAVID*

Dav. Look'ee, my lady—by the mass! there's mischief going on. Folks don't use to meet for amusement with firearms, firelocks, fire-engines, fire-screens, fire-office, and the devil knows what other crackers beside!—This, my lady, I say, has an angry favour.

Ful. But who is there beside Captain Absolute, friend?

Dav. My poor master—under favour for mentioning him first. You know me, my lady—I am David—and my master, of course, is, or *was*, Squire Acres. Then comes Squire Faulkland.

Ful. Do, ma'am, let us instantly endeavour to prevent mischief.

Mrs. Mal. Oh, fy!—it would be very inelegant in us:—we should only participate things.

Dav. Ah! do, Mrs. Aunt, save a few lives—they are desperately given, believe me.—Above all, there is that bloodthirsty Philistine, Sir Lucius O'Trigger.

Mrs. Mal. Sir Lucius O'Trigger? Oh, mercy! have they drawn poor little dear Sir Lucius into the scrape?—Why, how you stand, girl! you have no more feeling than one of the Derbyshire petrifications!

Lyd. What are we to do, madam?

Mrs. Mal. Why, fly with the utmost felicity, to be sure, to prevent mischief!—Here, friend, you can show us the place?

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Fag. If you please, ma'am, I will conduct you.—
David, do you look for Sir Anthony. [*Exit DAVID*]

Mrs. Mal. Come, girls! this gentleman will exhort
us.—Come, sir, you're our envoy—lead the way, and
we'll precede.

Fag. Not a step before the ladies for the world!

Mrs. Mal. You're sure you know the spot?

Fag. I think I can find it, ma'am; and one good
thing is, we shall hear the report of the pistols as we
draw near, so we can't well miss them;—never fear,
ma'am, never fear. [*Exeunt, he talking*]

SCENE II: *The South Parade*

*Enter Captain ABSOLUTE, putting his sword under his
great coat*

Abs. A sword seen in the streets of Bath would raise
as great an alarm as a mad dog.—How provoking this
is in Faulkland!—never punctual! I shall be obliged to
go without him at last.—Oh, the devil! here's Sir An-
thony!—how shall I escape him?

[*Muffles up his face, and takes a circle to go off*]

Enter Sir ANTHONY ABSOLUTE

Sir Anth. How one may be deceived at a little dis-
tance! only that I see he don't know me, I could have
sworn that was Jack!—Hey! Gad's life! it is.—Why,
Jack, what are you afraid of? hey!—sure I'm right.
—Why, Jack,—Jack Absolute! [*Goes up to him*]

Abs. Really, sir, you have the advantage of me:—I

A& Fifth

don't remember ever to have had the honour—my name is Saunderson, at your service.

Sir Anth. Sir, I beg your pardon—I took you—hey?—why, zounds! it is—Stay—[*Looks up to his face.*] So, so—your humble servant, Mr. Saunderson!—Why, you scoundrel, what tricks are you after now?

Abs. Oh, a joke, sir, a joke!—I came here on purpose to look for you, sir.

Sir Anth. You did! well, I am glad you were so lucky:—but what are you muffled up so for?—what's this for?—hey!

Abs. 'Tis cool, sir; is n't it?—rather chilly somehow—but I shall be late—I have a particular engagement.

Sir Anth. Stay!—Why, I thought you were looking for me?—Pray, Jack, where is't you are going?

Abs. Going, sir!

Sir Anth. Ay,—where are you going?

Abs. Where am I going?

Sir Anth. You unmannerly puppy!

Abs. I was going, sir, to—to—to—to Lydia—sir, to Lydia—to make matters up if I could;—and I was looking for you, sir, to—to—to—

Sir Anth. To go with you, I suppose.—Well, come along.

Abs. Oh! Zounds! no, sir, not for the world!—I wished to meet with you, sir,—to—to—to—to—You find it cool, I'm sure, sir—you'd better not stay out.

Sir Anth. Cool!—not at all.—Well, Jack—and what will you say to Lydia?

The Rivals

Abs. Oh, sir, beg her pardon, humour her—promise and vow : but I detain you, sir—consider the cold air on your gout.

Sir Anth. Oh, not at all!—not at all! I'm in no hurry. — Ah! Jack, you youngsters, when once you are wounded here—[*Putting his hand to Captain ABSOLUTE's breast.*] Hey! what the deuce have you got here?

Abs. Nothing, sir—nothing.

Sir Anth. What's this?—here's something damned hard.

Abs. Oh, trinkets, sir! trinkets!—a bauble for Lydia!

Sir Anth. Nay, let me see your taste.—[*Pulls his coat open, the sword falls.*] Trinkets!—a bauble for Lydia! —Zounds! sirrah, you are not going to cut her throat, are you?

Abs. Ha! ha! ha!—I thought it would divert you, sir, though I didn't mean to tell you till afterwards.

Sir Anth. You didn't?—Yes, this is a very diverting trinket, truly!

Abs. Sir, I'll explain to you.—You know, sir, Lydia is romantic, devilish romantic, and very absurd of course : now, sir, I intend, if she refuses to forgive me, to unsheath this sword, and swear—I'll fall upon its point, and expire at her feet!

Sir Anth. Fall upon a fiddlestick's end!—why, I suppose it is the very thing that would please her.—Get along, you fool!

Abs. Well, sir, you shall hear of my success—you shall hear.—*O Lydia!*—*forgive me, or this pointed steel*—says I.



“ You unmannerly puppy ! ”

“You know the way?”



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Act Fifth

Sir Anth. O booby! stab away and welcome—says she.
—Get along and damn your trinkets!

[*Exit Captain ABSOLUTE*

Enter DAVID, running

Dav. Stop him! Stop him! Murder! Thief! Fire!—
—Stop fire! Stop fire!—O Sir Anthony—call! call!
bid 'm stop! Murder! Fire!

Sir Anth. Fire! Murder!—Where?

Dav. Oons! he's out of sight! and I'm out of breath
for my part! O Sir Anthony, why didn't you stop him?
why didn't you stop him?

Sir Anth. Zounds! the fellow's mad!—Stop whom?
stop Jack?

Dav. Ay, the captain, sir!—there's murder and
slaughter—

Sir Anth. Murder!

Dav. Ay, please you, Sir Anthony, there's all kinds
of murder, all sorts of slaughter to be seen in the fields:
there's fighting going on, sir—bloody sword-and-gun
fighting!

Sir Anth. Who are going to fight, dunce?

Dav. Everybody that I know of, Sir Anthony:—
everybody is going to fight, my poor master, Sir Lucius
O'Trigger, your son, the captain—

Sir Anth. Oh, the dog!—I see his tricks.—Do you
know the place?

Dav. King's-Mead-Fields.

Sir Anth. You know the way?

Dav. Not an inch; but I'll call the mayor—alder-

The Rivals

men—constables—churchwardens—and beadles—we can't be too many to part them.

Sir Anth. Come along—give me your shoulder! we'll get assistance as we go—the lying villain—Well, I shall be in such a frenzy!—So—this was the history of his trinkets! I'll bauble him! [*Exeunt*

SCENE III: *King's-Mead-Fields*

Enter Sir LUCIUS O'TRIGGER and ACRES, with pistols

Acres. By my valour! then, Sir Lucius, forty yards is a good distance. Odds levels and aims!—I say it is a good distance.

Sir Luc. Is it for muskets or small field-pieces? Upon my conscience, Mr. Acres, you must leave those things to me.—Stay now—I'll show you.—[*Measures paces along the stage.*] There now, that is a very pretty distance—a pretty gentleman's distance.

Acres. Zounds! we might as well fight in a sentry-box! I tell you, Sir Lucius, the farther he is off, the cooler I shall take my aim.

Sir Luc. Faith! then I suppose you would aim at him best of all if he was out of sight!

Acres. No, Sir Lucius; but I should think forty or eight-and-thirty yards—

Sir Luc. Pho! pho! nonsense! three or four feet between the mouths of your pistols is as good as a mile.

Acres. Odds bullets, no!—by my valour! there is no merit in killing him so near: do, my dear Sir Lucius, let

Act Fifth

me bring him down at a long shot :—a long shot, Sir Lucius, if you love me!

Sir Luc. Well, the gentleman's friend and I must settle that.—But tell me now, Mr. Acres, in case of an accident, is there any little will or commission I could execute for you?

Acres. I am much obliged to you, Sir Lucius—but I don't understand—

Sir Luc. Why, you may think there's no being shot at without a little risk—and if an unlucky bullet should carry a quietus with it—I say it will be no time then to be bothering you about family matters.

Acres. A quietus!

Sir Luc. For instance, now—if that should be the case—would you choose to be pickled and sent home?—or would it be the same to you to lie here in the Abbey?—I'm told there is very snug lying in the Abbey.

Acres. Pickled!—Snug lying in the Abbey!—Odds tremors! Sir Lucius, don't talk so!

Sir Luc. I suppose, Mr. Acres, you never were engaged in an affair of this kind before?

Acres. No, Sir Lucius, never before.

Sir Luc. Ah! that's a pity—there's nothing like being used to a thing.—Pray now, how would you receive the gentleman's shot?

Acres. Odds files!—I've practised that—there, Sir Lucius—there.—[*Puts himself in an attitude.*] A side-front, hey? Odd! I'll make myself small enough: I'll stand edgeways.

Sir Luc. Now—you're quite out—for if you stand

The Rivals

so when I take my aim— [*Levelling at him*
Acres. Zounds! Sir Lucius—are you sure it is not
cocked?

Sir Luc. Never fear.

Acres. But—but—you don't know—it may go off
of its own head!

Sir Luc. Pho! be easy.—Well, now if I hit you in
the body my bullet has a double chance—for if it
misses a vital part of your right side—'t will be very hard
if it don't succeed on the left!

Acres. A vital part!

Sir Luc. But, there—fix yourself so—[*Placing him*]
—let him see the broadside of your full front—there—
now a ball or two may pass clean through your body,
and never do any harm at all.

Acres. Clean through me!—a ball or two clean
through me!

Sir Luc. Ay—may they—and it is much the gen-
teelest attitude into the bargain.

Acres. Look'ee! Sir Lucius—I'd just as lieve be shot
in an awkward posture as a genteel one—so, by my
valour! I will stand edgeways.

Sir Luc. [*Looking at his watch.*] Sure they don't mean
to disappoint us—Hah!—no, faith—I think I see them
coming.

Acres. Hey!—what!—coming!—

Sir Luc. Ay.—Who are those yonder getting over the
stile?

Acres. There are two of them indeed!—well—let

Act Fifth

them come—hey, Sir Lucius!—we—we—we—we—
—won't run.

Sir Luc. Run!

Acres. No—I say—we *won't* run, by my valour!

Sir Luc. What the devil's the matter with you?

Acres. Nothing—nothing—my dear friend—my dear Sir Lucius—but I—I—I don't feel quite so bold, somehow, as I did.

Sir Luc. Oh, fy!—consider your honour.

Acres. Ay—true—my honour. Do, Sir Lucius, edge in a word or two every now and then about my honour.

Sir Luc. Well, here they're coming. [*Looking*

Acres. Sir Lucius—if I wa'n't with you, I should almost think I was afraid.—If my valour should leave me!—Valour will come and go.

Sir Luc. Then pray keep it fast, while you have it.

Acres. Sir Lucius—I doubt it is going—yes—my valour is certainly going!—it is sneaking off!—I feel it oozing out as it were, at the palms of my hands!

Sir Luc. Your honour—your honour.—Here they are.

Acres. Oh, mercy!—now—that I was safe at Clod-Hall! or could be shot before I was aware!

Enter FAULKLAND and Captain ABSOLUTE

Sir Luc. Gentlemen, your most obedient.—Hah!—what, Captain Absolute!—So, I suppose, sir, you are come here, just like myself—to do a kind office, first for your friend—then to proceed to business on your own account.

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"W. Pat. Jack! - my dear Jack!"

Act Fifth

show his face!—If *he* were here, I'd make him give up his pretensions directly!—

Abs. Hold, Bob—let me set you right—there is no such man as Beverley in the case.—The person who assumed that name is before you; and as his pretensions are the same in both characters, he is ready to support them in whatever way you please.

Sir Luc. Well, this is lucky.—Now you have an opportunity—

Acres. What, quarrel with my dear friend Jack Absolute? not if he were fifty Beverleys! Zounds! Sir Lucius, you would not have me so unnatural.

Sir Luc. Upon my conscience, Mr. Acres, your valour has oozed away with a vengeance.

Acres. Not in the least! Odds backs and abettors! I'll be your second with all my heart—and if you should get a *quietus* you may command me entirely. I'll get you *snug lying* in the *Abbey here*; or *pickle* you, and send you over to Blunderbuss-Hall, or anything of the kind, with the greatest pleasure.

Sir Luc. Pho! pho! you are little better than a coward.

Acres. Mind, gentlemen, he calls me a *coward*; coward was the word, by my valour.

Sir Luc. Well, sir?

Acres. Look'ee, Sir Lucius, 'tis n't that I mind the word coward—*coward* may be said in joke—But if you had called me a *poltroon*, odds daggers and balls—

Sir Luc. Well, sir?

Acres.—I should have thought you a very ill-bred man.

Sir Luc. Pho! you are beneath my notice.

The Rivals

Abs. Nay, Sir Lucius, you can't have a better second than my friend Acres—He is a most *determined dog*—called in the country *Fighting Bob*.—He generally *kills a man a week*—don't you, Bob?

Acres. Ay—at home!—

Sir Luc. Well, then, captain, 'tis we must begin—so come out, my little counsellor—[*Draws his sword*]—and ask the gentleman whether he will resign the lady without forcing you to proceed against him?

Abs. Come on then, sir—[*Draws*]; since you won't let it be an amicable suit, here's my reply.

Enter Sir ANTHONY ABSOLUTE, DAVID, Mrs. MALAPROP, LYDIA, and JULIA

Dav. Knock 'em all down, sweet Sir Anthony; knock down my master in particular; and bind his hands over to their good behaviour!

Sir Anth. Put up, Jack, put up, or I shall be in a frenzy—how came you in a duel, sir?

Abs. Faith, sir, that gentleman can tell you better than I; 't was he called on me, and you know, sir, I serve his majesty.

Sir Anth. Here's a pretty fellow; I catch him going to cut a man's throat, and he tells me he serves his majesty!—Zounds! sirrah, then how durst you draw the king's sword against one of his subjects?

Abs. Sir, I tell you! that gentleman called me out, without explaining his reasons.

Sir Anth. Gad! sir, how came you to call my son out, without explaining your reasons?

Act Fifth

Sir Luc. Your son, sir, insulted me in a manner which my honour could not brook.

Sir Anth. Zounds! Jack, how durst you insult the gentleman in a manner which his honour could not brook?

Mrs. Mal. Come, come, let's have no honour before ladies—Captain Absolute, come here—How could you intimidate us so?—Here's Lydia has been terrified to death for you.

Abs. For fear I should be killed, or escape, ma'am?

Mrs. Mal. Nay, no delusions to the past—Lydia is convinced; speak, child.

Sir Luc. With your leave, ma'am, I must put in a word here—I believe I could interpret the young lady's silence.—Now mark—

Lyd. What is it you mean, sir?

Sir Luc. Come, come, Delia, we must be serious now—this is no time for trifling.

Lyd. 'T is true, sir; and your reproof bids me offer this gentleman my hand, and solicit the return of his affections.

Abs. Oh! my little angel, say you so?—Sir Lucius—I perceive there must be some mistake here, with regard to the affront which you affirm I have given you. I can only say that it could not have been intentional. And as you must be convinced that I should not fear to support a real injury—you shall now see that I am not ashamed to atone for an inadvertency—I ask your pardon.—But for this lady, while honoured with her approbation, I will support my claim against any man whatever.

The Rivals

Sir Anth. Well said, Jack, and I'll stand by you, my boy.

Acres. Mind, I give up all my claim—I make no pretensions to anything in the world—and if I can't get a wife without fighting for her, by my valour! I'll live a bachelor.

Sir Luc. Captain, give me your hand—an affront handsomely acknowledged becomes an obligation;—and as for the lady—if she chooses to deny her own handwriting, here— [*Takes out letters*

Mrs. Mal. Oh, he will dissolve my mystery!—Sir Lucius, perhaps there's some mistake,—perhaps I can illuminate—

Sir Luc. Pray, old gentlewoman, don't interfere where you have no business.—Miss Languish, are you my Delia, or not?

Lyd. Indeed, Sir Lucius, I am not.

[*Walks aside with Captain* ABSOLUTE

Mrs. Mal. Sir Lucius O'Trigger—ungrateful as you are—I own the soft impeachment—pardon my blushes, I am Delia.

Sir Luc. You Delia—pho! pho! be easy.

Mrs. Mal. Why, thou barbarous Vandyke—those letters are mine—When you are more sensible of my benignity—perhaps I may be brought to encourage your addresses.

Sir Luc. Mrs. Malaprop, I am extremely sensible of your condescension; and whether you or Lucy have put this trick on me, I am equally beholden to you.—And to show you I am not ungrateful, Captain Absolute,

Act Fifth

since you have taken that lady from me, I'll give you my Delia into the bargain.

Abs. I am much obliged to you, Sir Lucius; but here's my friend, Fighting Bob, unprovided for.

Sir Luc. Hah! little Valour—here, will you make your fortune?

Acres. Odds wrinkles! No.—But give me your hand, Sir Lucius, forget and forgive; but if ever I give you a chance of *pickling* me again, say Bob Acres is a dunce, that's all.

Sir Anth. Come, Mrs. Malaprop, don't be cast down—you are in your bloom yet.

Mrs. Mal. O Sir Anthony—men are all barbarians.

[*All retire but JULIA and FAULKLAND*

Jul. [*Aside.*] He seems dejected and unhappy—not sullen; there was some foundation, however, for the tale he told me—O woman! how true should be your judgment, when your resolution is so weak!

Faulk. Julia!—how can I sue for what I so little deserve? I dare not presume—yet Hope is the child of Penitence.

Jul. O Faulkland, you have not been more faulty in your unkind treatment of me, than I am now in wanting inclination to resent it. As my heart honestly bids me place my weakness to the account of love, I should be ungenerous not to admit the same plea for yours.

Faulk. Now I shall be blest indeed!

Sir Anth. [*Coming forward.*] What's going on here?—So you have been quarrelling too, I warrant!—Come,

The Rivals

Julia, I never interfered before ; but let me have a hand in the matter at last. — All the fault I have ever seen in my friend Faulkland seemed to proceed from what he calls the delicacy and warmth of his affection for you. — There, marry him directly, Julia ; you'll find he'll mend surprisingly! [*The rest come forward*]

Sir Luc. Come, now, I hope there is no dissatisfied person, but what is content ; for as I have been disappointed myself, it will be very hard if I have not the satisfaction of seeing other people succeed better —

Acres. You are right, Sir Lucius. — So Jack, I wish you joy — Mr. Faulkland the same. — Ladies, — come now, to show you I'm neither vexed nor angry, odds tabours and pipes ! I'll order the fiddles in half an hour to the New Rooms — and I insist on your all meeting me there.

Sir Anth. 'Gad ! sir, I like your spirit ; and at night we single lads will drink a health to the young couples, and a husband to Mrs. Malaprop.

Faulk. Our partners are stolen from us, Jack — I hope to be congratulated by each other — *yours* for having checked in time the errors of an ill-directed imagination, which might have betrayed an innocent heart ; and *mine*, for having, by her gentleness and candour, reformed the unhappy temper of one who by it made wretched whom he loved most, and tortured the heart he ought to have adored.

Abs. Well, Jack, we have both tasted the bitters, as well as the sweets of love ; with this difference only, that *you* always prepared the bitter cup for yourself, while *I* —

Act Fifth

Lyd. Was always obliged to *me* for it, hey! Mr. Modesty?—But come, no more of that—our happiness is now as unalloyed as general.

Jul. Then let us study to preserve it so: and while Hope pictures to us a flattering scene of future bliss, let us deny its pencil those colours which are too bright to be lasting.—When hearts deserving happiness would unite their fortunes, Virtue would crown them with an unfading garland of modest hurtless flowers; but ill-judging Passion will force the gaudier rose into the wreath, whose thorn offends them when its leaves are dropped!

[*Exeunt omnes*]

Epilogue

BY THE AUTHOR

Spoken by Mrs. BULKLEY

LADIES, for *you*—I heard our poet say—
He'd try to coax some *moral* from his play:
"One moral's plain," cried I, "without more fuss:
Man's social happiness all rests on us:
Through all the drama—whether damn'd or not—

Love gilds the scene, and women guide the plot.

From every rank obedience is our due—
D'yedoubt?—The world's great stages shall prove it true."

The cit, well skill'd to shun domestic strife,
Will sup abroad; but first he'll ask his *wife*:
John Trot, his friend, for once will do the same,
But then—he'll just step *home to tell his dame*.

The *surly Squire* at noon resolves to rule,
And half the day—Zounds! madam is a fool!
Convinced at night, the vanquish'd victor says,
Ah, Kate! you women *have such coaxing ways!*

The *jolly Toper* chides each tardy blade,
Till reeling Bacchus calls on Love for aid:
Then with each toast he sees fair bumpers swim,
And kisses Chloe on the sparkling brim!

Nay, I have heard that Statesmen—great and wise—
Will *sometimes* counsel with a lady's eyes!
The servile suitors watch her various face,
She smiles preferment, or she frowns disgrace,
Curtsies a pension here—there nods a place.

The Rivals

Nor with less awe, in scenes of humbler life,
Is *view'd* the *mistress*, or is *heard* the *wife*.
The poorest peasant of the poorest soil,
The child of poverty, and heir to toil,
Early from radiant Love's impartial light
Steals one small spark to cheer this world of night :
Dear spark! that oft through winter's chilling woes
Is all the warmth his little cottage knows!

The wandering *Tar*, who not for *years* has press'd
The widow'd partner of his *day* of rest,
On the cold deck, far from her arms removed,
Still hums the ditty which his Susan loved ;
And while around the cadence rude is blown,
The boatswain whistles in a softer tone.

The *Soldier*, fairly proud of wounds and toil,
Pants for the *triumph* of his Nancy's smile ;
But ere the battle should he list' her cries,
The lover trembles—and the hero dies!
That heart, by war and honour steel'd to fear,
Droops on a sigh, and sickens at a tear!

But ye more cautious, ye nice-judging few,
Who give to Beauty only Beauty's due,
Though friends to Love—*ye* view with deep regret
Our conquests marr'd, our triumphs incomplete,
Till polish'd Wit more lasting charms disclose,
And Judgment fix the darts which Beauty throws!

In female breasts did sense and merit rule,
The lover's mind would ask no other school ;
Shamed into sense, the scholars of our eyes,
Our beaux from *gallantry* would soon be wise ;
Would gladly light, their homage to improve,
The lamp of Knowledge at the torch of Love!

Notes

Notes

Preface

FADED ideas float in the fancy like half-forgotten dreams; and the imagination in its fullest enjoyments becomes suspicious of its offspring, and doubts whether it has created or adopted."

This passage was quoted by Burgoyne, in the preface of the *Heiress*. The same thought is to be found also in the *Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table*, where Dr. Holmes said, "I never wrote a line of verse that seemed to me comparatively good, but it appeared old at once, and often as if it had been borrowed." A little earlier in the same chapter, the Autocrat had declared the law which governs in such cases: "When a person of fair character for literary honesty uses an image such as another has employed before him, the presumption is that he has struck upon it independently, or unconsciously recalled it, supposing it his own."

"It is not without pleasure that I catch at an opportunity of justifying myself from the charge of intending any national reflection in the character of Sir Lucius O'Trigger."

In his *Retrospections of the Stage*, John Bernard, who was present at the unfortunate first performance of the *Rivals*, has declared that the audience was indifferent to Sir Lucius as acted by Lee. When the play was revised, Clinch took the part. Why any one should object to Sir Lucius, it is now difficult to discover. Sir Lucius is one of the best of stage-Irishmen, and he is emphatically an Irish gentleman.

ACT I

SCENE I

THOMAS: *But pray, Mr. Fag, what kind of a place is this Bath?"*

It is not easy now to understand fully the extraordinary

The Rivals

brilliance of Bath after Beau Nash had organized Society there. The manners and customs of Bath, as they were a very few years before the date of the *Rivals*, may be seen in Anstey's *New Bath Guide*, first published in 1766; and Anstey's lively verses prove that the town offered unusual advantages to the social satirist and the comic dramatist. In *Humphrey Clinker*, Smollett has left us an elaborate description of the place and the people to be met there. Foote's comedy, the *Maid of Bath*, was a dramatic setting of the romantic story of Miss Linley, Sheridan's wife. The best account of Bath at this time is to be found in a French book, A. Barbeau's *Une Ville d'Eaux Anglaise* (Paris: Picard, 1904).

SCENE II

"LYDIA: *And could not you get 'The Reward of Constancy'?*"

Miss Lydia Languish seems to have had a catholic taste in fiction. Most of the books she sought were novelties: *The Mistakes of the Heart* and *The Tears of Sensibility* were translations from the French, published in 1773. *The Delicate Distress* and *The Gordian Knot* had been published together in four volumes in the same year. *The Memoirs of a Lady of Quality* (i.e. Lady Vane) were included in Smollett's *Peregrine Pickle*, published first in 1751; *Humphrey Clinker* did not appear till 1771. *The Sentimental Journey* had been originally published in 1768, in two volumes.

"LYDIA: *Here, my dear Lucy, hide these books.*"

Miss Languish was evidently fond of Smollett. After *Peregrine Pickle*, with its *Memoirs of a Lady of Quality*, and after *Humphrey Clinker*, comes *Roderick Random*, published in 1748. *The Innocent Adultery* was the second title of Southorne's tragedy, *The Fatal Marriage*, revived as *Isabella*; or, *the Fatal Marriage*, for Mrs. Siddons, after Sheridan became the manager of Drury Lane Theatre. A century ago English plays were read as French plays are still. Henry Mackenzie's *Man of Feeling* had first appeared in 1771. Mrs. Chapone's

Notes

Letters on the Improvement of the Mind, addressed to her niece, had been published in 1773 in two volumes; and Lord Chesterfield's *Letters*, written in 1768, had not been given to the world until 1774. From notes found by Moore, we know that Sheridan had begun to draft a criticism of Lord Chesterfield's precepts just before he sat down resolutely to the writing of this play.

"MRS. MALAPROP: *'Tis safest in matrimony to begin with a little aversion.*"

With a readiness recalling Sheridan's own promptness in repartee, George Canning quoted this assertion of Mrs. Malaprop's, in a speech delivered in the House of Commons in 1825.

"SIR ANTHONY: *Well, I must leave you.*"

The traditional business of Sir Anthony's departure requires him to bow and gain the door, and then to return to say the next clause as though it had just occurred to him. This leave-taking, protracted by Mrs. Malaprop's elaborate courtesies, is repeated two or three times before Sir Anthony finally takes himself off.

"LUCY: *And a black padusoy.*"

Paduasoy was a particular kind of silk stuff, deriving its name from the Italian town Padua, and the French word *soie*, silk.

A& II

SCENE I

"FAG: *I beg pardon, sir—I beg pardon—but, with submission, a lie is nothing unless one supports it. Sir, whenever I draw on my invention for a good current lie, I always forge indorsements as well as the bill.*"

This use of mercantile technicalities was not uncommon with Sheridan; and Fag's idioms may be compared with

The Rivals

Sir Peter Teazle's declaration (*School for Scandal*, Act II, Scene II) that he "would have law merchant," for those who report what they hear, so that, "in all cases of slander currency, whenever the drawer of the lie was not to be found, the injured parties should have a right to come on any of the indorsers."

"Enter FAULKLAND."

Faulkland is the name of two prominent characters, a father and a son, in the *Memoirs of Miss Sidney Biddulph*, the novel written by Mrs. Frances Sheridan; but neither of them in any way resembles this Faulkland of her son's.

"ACRES: *My hair has been in training some time.*"

Here Acres removes his cap, and shows his side-curls in papers. After his next speech, he turns his back to the audience to show his back-hair elaborately dressed.

"ACRES: *Damns have had their day.*"

In his *History of the English Stage* (v. 461), the Rev. Mr. Geneste quotes an epigram of Sir John Harrington's, quite pertinent here:

"In elder times, an ancient custom was
To swear, in weighty matters, by the mass;
But when the mass went down, as old men note,
They sware, then, by the cross of this same groat;
And when the cross was likewise held in scorn,
Then by their faith the common oath was sworn;
Last having sworn away all faith and troth,
Only God damn them is their common oath.
Thus custom kept decorum by gradation,
That losing mass, cross, faith, they find damnation."

"SIR ANTHONY: *What's that to you, sir?*"

The alleged likeness of Sir Anthony to Smollett's Matthew Bramble is very slight indeed. Sheridan's treatment of Sir

Notes

Anthony in this scene and in the contrasting scene in the next act is exquisite comedy. In these two scenes is to be found the finest writing in the play. The present scene may be compared with one somewhat similar between Mrs. Linnet and Miss Linnet in the first act of Foote's *Maid of Bath*.

"SIR ANTHONY : *Like the bull in Cox's Museum.*"

Cox's Museum was a popular and fashionable exhibition of natural and mechanical curiosities. There are many allusions to it in contemporary literature. In *Evelina* for instance, published in 1778, three years after the *Rivals* was written, Miss Burney takes her heroine to Cox's Museum and describes some of the many marvels it must have contained.

SCENE II

"FAG : *We will—we will.* [Exeunt severally.]"

The traditional business here is for Fag to parody the exit of Sir Lucius just before, calling Lucy, kissing her, saying, "I'll quiet your conscience," and then making his exit, humming the tune he has just caught from Sir Lucius.

ACT III

SCENE III

"MRS. MALAPROP : *Oh, it gives me the hydrostatics to such a degree.—I thought she had persisted from corresponding with him; but, behold, this very day, I have interceded another letter from the fellow; I believe I have it in my pocket.*"

As Mrs. Malaprop, Mrs. John Drew used first to take from her pocket the letter of Sir Lucius and then, discovering her mistake, to produce with much difficulty and in great confusion the letter which Captain Absolute recognizes at once. (See *The Autobiography of Joseph Jefferson*, pp. 400, 401.)

"LYDIA : *O heavens! Beverley!*"

Lydia Languish has been called a second edition of Colman's

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Polly Honeycombe; but the charge has only the slightest foundation. It would have been more difficult to evolve Lydia from Polly than to have made her out of nothing. If a prototype must be found for Lydia, it had better be sought in the Niece in Steele's *Tender Husband*. In Steele's play, the relations of the Aunt and the Niece are not unlike those of Mrs. Malaprop and Lydia; and we are told that the Niece "has spent all her solitude in reading romances, her head is full of shepherds, knights, flowery meads, groves, and streams" (Act I, Scene I). And she anticipates Lydia in thinking that "it looks so ordinary, to go out at a door to be married. Indeed I ought to be taken out of a window, and run away with" (Act IV, Scene I). It may be noted, also, that the lover of Steele's airy heroine visits her in disguise and makes love to her before the face of the Aunt.

SCENE IV

"ACRES [practising a dancing step]: *These outlandish heathen allemandes and cotillons are quite beyond me! — I shall never prosper at 'em, that's sure — mine are true-born English legs — they don't understand their curst French lingo.*"

In his *History of the English Stage*, Geneste recalls a parallel passage in the *Wasps* of Aristophanes, where the old man, on being desired to put on a pair of Lacedemonian boots, endeavours to excuse himself by saying that one of his toes is a sworn enemy to the Lacedemonians.

"ACRES: *That's too civil by half.*"

In the writing of the challenge most actors of Acres indulge in "gags" beyond the bounds of all decency, and until comedy sinks into clowning. Mr. Joseph Jefferson refused to make the judicious grieve by saying, "to prevent the confusion that might arise from our both *undressing* the same lady," and other vulgarities of that sort, retaining, however, the subtler jest of Acres's pause and hesitation when he

Notes

comes to the word "company," of his significant whisper in the ear of Sir Lucius, and of Sir Lucius's prompt solution of the orthographical problem, — "With a *c*, of course!"

ACT IV

SCENE II

"MRS. MALAPROP: *Comparisons don't become a young woman.*"

Here Mrs. Malaprop comes very near to Dogberry's "comparisons are odorous" (*Much Ado About Nothing*, Act III, Scene V). Perhaps the earliest use of the phrase is in *The Posies of George Gascoigne* (1575), where we find, "Since all comparisons are odious."

ACT V

SCENE I

"FAULKLAND: *Julia, I have proved you to the quick!*"

Moore considers that this scene was suggested by Prior's ballad of the *Nut-brown Maid*, and so indeed it may have been, although Prior's situation is very different from Sheridan's. In the *Nut-brown Maid*, the high-born lover conceals his rank, approaches his mistress in various disguises, and at last tests her love by a tale of murder, like Faulkland's. She stands the test like Julia. Then the lover confesses the trick and reveals his rank, whereat the maid is joyful. The point of Sheridan's more dramatic situation is in the recoil of Faulkland's distrustful ingenuity on his own head, and the rejection of his suit by Julia, so soon as he declares his fraud.

"LYDIA: *How often have I stole forth, in the coldest night in January, and found him in the garden, stuck like a dripping statue.*"

In his notes to his own translation of Horace, Sir Theodore Martin drew attention to the likeness of this speech of Ly-

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dia's to the lines in the Tenth Ode of the Third Book, in which Horace adjures a certain Lycè to take pity on him.

"You would pity, sweet Lycè, the poor soul that shivers
Out here at your door in the merciless blast.

"Only hark how the doorway goes straining and creaking,
And the piercing wind pipes through the trees that surround

The court of your villa, while black frost is streaking
With ice the crisp snow that lies thick on the ground!

"Yet be not as cruel—forgive my upbraiding—
As snakes, nor as hard as the toughest of oak;
Think, to stand out here, drenched to the skin, serenading
All night may in time prove too much of a joke."

SCENE II

"ABSOLUTE: *Really, sir, you have the advantage of me.*"

Captain Absolute is the son of a long line of light and lively heroes of comedy, and the father of a line almost as long. Foremost among his ancestors is the inventive protagonist of Foote's *Liar*, and foremost among his progeny is the even more slippery young man in Boucicault's *London Assurance*, who ventures to deny his father in much the same fashion as Captain Absolute.

SCENE III

"ACRES: *By my valour!*"

By a hundred devious ways, Bob Acres traces his descent from that other humorous coward, Sir Andrew Aguecheek; and the duels into which both gentlemen enter valiantly are not without a certain highly comic resemblance.

"SIR LUCIUS: *I'm told there is very snug lying in the Abbey.*"

This reference is, of course, to the Abbey church, at Bath, in which Sarah Fielding, the sister of the novelist, is buried.

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